Freedom And Responsibility

In Qur'anic Perspective

By
HASAN AL-'ANANI

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Translated by
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CONTENTS

Preface

PART I
THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY IN ISLAM

Chapter One

The Role of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* in Developing the Muslim Person and the Islamic Community 4

Chapter Two

The Definition of Responsibility
I. The Qur'anic Perspective 9
II. A Philosophical Perspective 11
III. A Sociological Perspective 14
IV. A Juristic Perspective 15

Chapter Three

The Degeneration of Philosophical Thought in the Views of Some Secular Philosophers 19

Chapter Four

The Qur'an and the Co-relation between Economic and Religious Development. 27

PART TWO
FREEDOM: THE KEY TO ISLAMIC SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Chapter One

Freedom
I. A Brief Description 35
II. Freedom and the Nature of Human Development 36
III. Analysis of Texts on "Trust," "Vicegerency," and "Testimony" 47

Chapter Two

Development of Potentialities and Capabilities
I. The Prerequisites of Accountability in the *Shari'ah* 53
II. Comprehensives of the Legal Provisions 56
III. Building a Responsible Personality Before Adulthood 58
IV. A Model of Social Development 60
V. The Signs of Puberty as the Age of Responsibility 67
VI. Mental and Physical Capability for Responsibility 69

PART THREE

ISLAM AND THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN EFFORT

Chapter One

The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* on the Importance of Human Effort in Choosing Conduct
I. Teachings of the Qur'an 77
II. Teachings of the *Sunnah* on the Phases of Developing Responsibility 81
A. First Phase 81
B. Second Phase 82
C. Third Phase 86

Chapter Two

Predestination and Freedom of Human Action
I. The Prominence of Human Effort in Revelation . . . 90
II. Qur'anic Teachings 91
III. The *Sunnah* on Human Responsibility 95

Chapter Three

Preserving Human Freedom of Choice and Action
I. Divine Facilitation (*Yusr* or *Taysir*) 104
II. Advanced Facilitation and *Istidraj* 111

PART FOUR

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY, THE ETERNAL WILL OF ALLAH, AND THE WILLS OF HIS CREATURES

Chapter One

Divine Providence and Its Effect on Man's Free Will . . 117
I. The Divine Will: Qur'anic Verses and Ahadith . . . 118
II. Man's Will: Qur'anic Verses and Ahadith 124
III. The Two Wills Juxtaposed 127
IV. The Conclusive Rule 132

Chapter Two

Fate as an Excuse to Avoid Responsibility
I. Turning the Argument On Its Head 137
II. The Four Possible Relationships Between Divine Providence and Human Freedom 139

Chapter Three

Divine Providence and the Last Acts of Man 142

Chapter Four

The Meaning of *Mash'ia* (Will)
I. Two Basic Uses of the Word "Will" in the Qur'an 148
II. Perspectives on Good and Evil as the Will of Allah 149
III. Qur'anic Distinctions Between the Two Wills . . . 152

Chapter Five

Prohibition of Discussing Predestination
I. Sources for the Prohibition 156
II. Principles of the Prohibition 158
III. Pondering the Signs of Allah 162

PART FIVE

PRESERVING FREEDOM BY DEVELOPING THE GIFT OF FREE CHOICE

Chapter One

Intention
I. Developing the Freedom of a Strong Will and Character 169
II. Developing the Freedom of Social Solidarity 173
III. Some Ahadith About Intention 174

Chapter Two

Independence of Personality
I. Independence of Belief and Morals 185
II. Independence as the Basis of Freedom and Accountability 189
III. Personal Responsibility at the Inception of Islam . . . 193
IV. Personal Independence of Character as the Key to the Integrity of the Community 195

Chapter Three

Constant Prayer for Divine Help
I. The Psychological Elements 197
II. The Practical Elements 199
III. Supplications for Strength of Will 204

BIBLIOGRAPHY 209

INDEX 210

In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent

PREFACE

All praise is for Allah. Peace and blessings be to our Beloved guide, Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, his progeny, and his companions.

We are in an age of global change and development. The developing nations can benefit from the errors of the advanced industrial nations. But neither the "developed" nor the "developing" nations can avoid errors and prosper unless we follow the revealed guidance of Allah and the experience of Islam. Fortunately in the current phase of development there is an Islamic awakening everywhere, which seeks to call people to the path of Allah through practical means and with wisdom, knowledge, and a confidence in help from Allah.

This book contributes to an Islamic solution by treating man as a basic element in the problem of development. We shall emphasize three general characteristics of truly successful development:

First: The Development of the human personality based on the principles evident in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. This characteristic has many facets:

1) The contemporary Muslim's need to know and understand these principles in view of the present conditions of waste, defiance, weakness, negligence, deterioration, and pessimism. These conditions overshadow the life of a Muslim in this age due to his separation from the real source of his strength, honor, convictions, and aspirations, and to the jarring discordance between his daily life and the teachings of Islam.

2) The need to enrich the present Islamic renaissance with original and pure Islamic material, in order to deepen and further strengthen it, as well as to preserve it from false sentimentalism. Only on this basis can all young men and women faithfully follow the course of action that calls for determination, firm will, uninterrupted obedience, and both personal and social virtue. Anyone, by studying the book of Allah, can easily find the course of life to which Allah invites us all.

3) The need to marshall in coherent form all the diverse elements, principles, and bases of this course of life, which in the current Islamic literature is available only in bits and pieces scattered here and there in different books purporting to revive our Islamic heritage. This

course, in its original complete and clear form was prescribed richly and clearly in the Qur'an and supported and explained by the noble example of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Second: The unique Islamic economic system, which considers a close link with moral and social dimensions of life a necessary condition for proper growth and development. This economic system and its social and moral objectives make one single inseparable whole. In the absence of a moral dimension no economy can be termed truly Islamic.

Some of the most recent books on organization theory describe the teachings of the Qur'an, the Prophet, and Muslim scholars on economics as one of the miracles of Islam. It accomplished more than a millennium ago what only lately has been discovered by modern economists, namely, economic growth must be accompanied by a corresponding social development, because an all-round development is far more beneficial and effective even from a purely economic point of view.

This Islamic program for development of the human personality, with the power to choose and assert, and endowed with an intellect and a specific physical form - the gifts of Allah to man - is described both in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* at great length. They delineate the divine will and the will of His creatures in such sharp and vivid detail as to forestall any danger of regression in the development of the human personality. This Islamic program of action, which is an on-going achievement in the field of comprehensive economic development has been made possible under the impetus and guidance of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is rightly regarded as marking a new opening in generating material prosperity with economic and social justice.

Third: The interdependent relationship between responsibility and freedom. This third characteristic of successful economic development came to me as a result of the unique circumstances that produced this book.

I was abroad on a religious assignment on behalf of the Egyptian Ministry of Endowments. The duties of *dawah* obliged me to stay in a camp of Muslim youth in Brazil, but my health proved too poor to bear the strains and stresses of camp life. I fell sick and the doctors

diagnosed a blockage in the right part of my heart. I was placed in an intensive care unit for about two weeks. The doctors suggested a convalescence period at a peaceful place with conventional treatment and a periodic cardiogram by a mobile unit to be carried wherever I went. Accompanied by my family, I went to a place of their choice on the Atlantic coast, away from life and all its distractions.

Before this sickness I was working on a thesis, "Responsibility and Punishment in the *Sunnah*," and had registered it for my doctoral degree. But my health did not allow me to continue; so I gave it up. Now, that I was cut off from everything, I received a letter from my kind friend and learned scholar, Mahmud Al-Sharif, of the Islamic Center Sharjah, asking me about Muslims in those far off lands. The answer to this letter prompted me to start writing again. At the time I had no books other than the Qur'an and Sahih Al-Bukhari, which turned out to be a blessing of Allah, for when I wrote the most serious part of the thesis I based it on nothing but the Book of Allah and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet (s).

In the light of these sources I dealt with one of the trickiest issues about the human personality, namely, pre-destination and free will. What is the inter-relationship between the eternal Divine Will and the created human will? What is fate, what is human freedom, and what are its constituent elements? How does human responsibility relate to human capacities and abilities? What is the meaning of driving a person or a group gradually to its punishment (*istidraj*), and how does this relate to divine help and support? And, in particular, how does our focus on the independence of the person and on his or her consequent responsibility provide a key to the all round development of the Muslim personality in the light of the direct guidance of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

The fact is that the Qur'an and Hadith have treated these issues in such a specific, clear, and frank manner that they have left nothing vague, complicated or difficult about these problems.

When I finished writing this part, I was fully satisfied with it. The next thing I did was to make a will for my sons to publish it if I died before its publication.

Despite this contentment and satisfaction, I was reluctant to include it in my doctoral thesis. This was for two reasons. First, thanks to the

Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, the issues for which the academicians and thinkers sought conventional remedies appeared in this research in such a new form that this had nothing in common with the traditional patterns and paradigm of thought. The approach that appeared so clear from my reading of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* highlight the human personality as a responsible being with its own independent capabilities constantly under development. Most of the scholars dispute this approach. I told some of my sincere friends that these ideas would either improve my thesis or cause it to be totally rejected. In view of the nature of the committee, there could be no middle course. The intensity of my commitment forced me to retain this portion in the thesis, come what may.

The second reason for my reluctance was that I was saying nothing really new. The subjects of self-development of the human personality, its nature or essential constitution, free will, freedom of choice, capabilities, and potentialities, have been dealt with by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* in quite sufficient detail.

But academic practice is to evaluate a thesis by the number and nature of sources cited. I was convinced though that independent reference to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, was the most distinctive feature of all I had to say.

It was a pleasant surprise for me that the part I worried about won great acclaim for the thesis. This is a rare phenomenon in academic circles. Criticism was made of all portions of the thesis except the one that is published in the present book. It earned such praise, with unanimity of opinion, that one feels embarrassed even to mention it.

These three characteristic features of this part of my thesis are of prime importance for the development of Muslim society. Whether or not man is able to evolve a wholly new system of life for himself based on the essentials of good character (*akhlaq*), such as a healthy attitude of confidence, honesty, integrity, sound reason, and righteous conduct, depends on his willingness to follow and abide by the Qur'anic Pattern of life. And praise be to Allah Who guided us to it. Surely we could never have come by it without His guidance.

Dr. Hasan Saleh Al-'Anani

PART ONE

THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY IN ISLAM

Chapter One

The Role of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* in Shaping and Developing the Muslim Person and the Islamic Community

Chapter Two

The Definition of Responsibility
I. A Qur'anic Perspective
II. A Philosophical Perspective
III. A Sociological Perspective
IV. A Juristic Perspective

Chapter Three

Limitations of Human Reason and its Deviation from Revealed guidance

Chapter Four

The Holy Qur'an and the Correlation Between the Economic and Religious Development

Part One

The Concept of Responsibility in Islam

True Muslims by virtue of their morals and character are synonymous with Islam itself. But in fact, in this age of ours, Islam is one thing and most Muslims another.

The Qur'an portrays the Islamic Ummah as the best people raised for mankind. This applied to the age of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and the rightly guided caliphate. Then the situation changed and with it the practical scene inevitably changed. It is no longer a secret that the great impact of the course of Revelation on the Islamic Ummah is not evident in the life of Muslims today. The deviation of Muslims from Islam is a direct cause of their backwardness and decline, and their revival depends on their return to the purity of Islam. "Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change their inner selves."[1]

This explains why our pious ancestors were so keen in abiding by both the injunctions and spirit of the *shari'ah* or Islamic law. Religion cannot be blamed for the mistakes of individuals and groups. Only Prophets and Messengers are infallible. Therefore it is only fair that Muslims face the cause and effect relationship between their behavior and their condition.

Ignorance of this relationship is bound to harm the cause of *dawah* and of Islam. Many Muslims feel that their tragic situation today results from the religion itself. Those who are ignorant of Islam feel that Islamic teachings have something in them that has caused their backwardness. They believe that Islam teaches a kind of fatalism incompatible with the responsible attitude needed to subjugate the forces of the universe and thereby keep pace with modern times and with the demands of modern civilization.

Though this concept is totally opposed to Islamic teachings, the material success achieved by Western countries deepened their doubts about Islam and caused them to accuse it of passivity and backwardness.

True, any one pondering the situation of Islam and the Muslims today is dismayed, for Islam, the final and the last religion, and the most comprehensive one, embodies all the ingredients for success and progress. Yet the Muslims are in a situation that does not conform with the nature of this great religion.

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[1] Qur'an 13:11.

The enemies of Islam, both in the West and the East, are themselves partly responsible for this backwardness of Muslims by exploiting it in the most nefarious ways to plot against Islam and to banish it from the field of education and active life. Their total domination over the information media in the occupied countries also enabled them to launch regular and continuous attacks on Islam. It is no longer a secret that the enemies, despite the variety of their fronts, are in total agreement in their war against Islam. Whether it is Christianity or Zionism, Capitalism or Communism, they are one against Islam. Each one of these fronts has poisoned generations of Muslims. Some grew up in the monasteries of Western monks in African countries, which were fragmented and partitioned and where these generations completely severed their links with the religion of their ancestors. Some in Arab countries succumbed to Communism and were led away from Islam so they were no longer loyal to Islam or and to their *Ummah*. And there were some others who under the cultural onslaught of the West borrowed the western imperialistic concept of freedom with all its secular implications directly contradicting the teachings of Islam. They used it to pervert the rising generations, which soon evidenced nothing of Islam except their names. The Western as well as the Eastern blocs lavished on their votaries and followers great academic and literary honors in the world of thought, art, and culture, thus providing them with a means and an opportunity to contact and influence common people. Thus there emerged in Muslim societies a generation that had conformed to its enemies, with a common understanding and a common aim to isolate Islam from community life. Their motto was "give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." This new generation saw no harm in converting the mosques into museums. Many still argue that they are not fighting Islam as a religion, for they are civilized and freedom loving people who respect all religions. They will put chandeliers in the mosques as their counterparts lit candles in their churches.

It is no wonder that this poison was willingly swallowed by many, particularly by those who were determined to hold the reins of power in their own hands. The means that the enemies of Islam used were very sophisticated, for they did it in the name of knowledge, culture, and education, after isolating the original streams of our culture and barricading its channels. Employing these weapons they brainwashed their subjects to eradicate their Islamic faith and its program, morals, and behavior, with the

result that these generations trained by Western imperialism have nothing left in their minds except the culture of the West.

Chapter One

The Role of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* in Shaping and Developing the Muslim Person and the Islamic Community

Clearly it is our duty to restore the links of our youth with their heritage of free and deep rooted faith and with its expression in the creative wisdom of the *Shari'ah.* We can do so only by elucidating the teachings of Revelation, including both the Qur'an and the *Sunnah,* about the development by individuals, families, communities, and nations of an "Islamic personality" and by training them to bear responsibility toward themselves and others. This training will make clear to every Muslim his obligations toward his Lord, his religion, his soul, his family, his neighbor, his *Ummah,* and everything that binds him together with life and all other living beings.

This training should be based on the recorded wisdom of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and on the way he demonstrated these principles in his own life-example during the process of building a Muslim society. This society in Medina was blessed with all the ingredients of happiness and satisfaction and brought them all together within a single framework, the framework of worshipping Allah, until life became one vast house of prayer in every part of which Allah alone was adored and worshipped and every Muslim welcomed his or her responsibilities and sought as the final reward the pleasure of Allah.

The view of the Qur'an and the Sunnah on responsibility and reward found a practical manifestation in a social model unprecedented in the entire history of mankind. The *Sunnah* of the Prophet, peace be on him, produced a great generation which knew that the secret of success and prosperity lies in shouldering one's responsibility willingly and voluntarily. For this generation, spending in the cause of Allah was the greatest treasure trove, and they looked upon sacrifice, death, and martyrdom as the highest reality in life.

If we look into the teachings of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* on the role of responsibility and reward in shaping and developing an individual or a society, and on the pleasure that comes from bearing responsibility, we may be induced to implement them. Between the lowest form of social responsibility, i.e. removing a simple stone from

the road, and the highest form,[2] namely, offering one's life in the way of Allah, there are degrees which the *Sunnah* has specified and defined. A true understanding of this concept of responsibility would impel us to follow the glorious life-example of the Prophet, peace be on him. His followers' deep desire to lay down their lives in the way of Allah, the Almighty, was in fact an echo of the desire of the Prophet, peace be on him, who is reported to have said: "I wish I would be killed in the cause of Allah; then regain life and be killed again on His behalf, and once more regain life and be killed again.[3]

Martyrdom is the highest sacrifice to protect society and assure its freedom to develop and prosper Islamically. It is, as it were, sacrificing one's self for the advancement of other members of the society to the highest possible standards of social development.

This tradition of welcoming martyrdom reflects the burning desire of the faithful for an opportunity to bear a most arduous responsibility in the form of self-immolation.

This passion for responsibility was the direct outcome of the Islamic concept of reward and its intimate connection with and dependence upon the discharge of one's obligations. Says Allah: "Think not of those who are slain in the cause of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord."[4] The Prophet, peace be on him, is reported by Tirmidhi as saying: "The souls of the martyrs fly around the fruits of Paradise in the form of green birds."

Muslim related this in these words: "Their souls are in the bellies of green birds for whom there hang from the Throne certain candelabra on which they perch. They fly around the Paradise wheresoever they wish, and then return to these candelabra for rest." And those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah are a living embodiment of the words of the holy Prophet, peace be upon him: "Charity never diminishes wealth; Allah increases His servant in honor who forgives others; and whoever humbles himself for the sake of Allah, Allah

[2] A hadith recorded by Bukhari says: "And removing the injurious things from the way is charity. In another hadith reported by Al-Tirmidhi from Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri: "The Holy Prophet (Peace be on him) was asked: 'Who is the best man?' He said, 'The man who is engaged in struggle for the cause of Allah.' The people asked, 'And who next? He said, 'A believer living in one of the mountains who worships his Lord and from whose evil the people are safe.'"

[3] Bukhari, chapter on desiring martyrdom

[4] Qur'an, 3:119

uplifts him."[5] This tradition includes three glad tidings. In the economic sphere it assures man that "Charity never diminishes wealth;" and on the social plane it tells him that by forgiving others a servant is increased in honor by Allah; in moral terms, it holds out the happy assurance that whoever humbles himself for the sake of Allah will be uplifted by Him.

These glad tidings develop in a Muslim three qualities as the hallmark of responsible conduct and behavior. In the end he attains to a degree of proficiency where he spends continuously without ever being afraid of decreasing his wealth, and is capable of forgiving without being weak, and is humble without humiliating or disgracing himself.

This hadith or tradition of the Prophet begins with stress on economic responsibility because of its great effects on other aspects of life. The Qur'an also confirms this hadith when it mentions these responsibilities and places great emphasis on economic action: "If you loan to Allah a beautiful lean, He will double it to your credit and He will grant you forgiveness, for Allah is most ready to appreciate (service), Most Forbearing."[6] At another place in the Qur'an we read: "And nothing do you in the least (in His cause) but He replaces it: for He is the Best of those who grant sustenance.[7] Thus if life and wealth - the two dearest things to man - can be sacrificed for the sake of Allah then quite obviously a Muslim society should find the sacrifice of relatively lesser things far easier to offer and bear.

A look at the rest of the hadith shows a similar logic in the message that one's respect will increase as a reward for forgiveness while humility will be rewarded with uplift and exaltation. The Qur'an and the Sunnah have their own unique way of ensuring the faithful that if they bear their responsibilities they need have no apprehensions of poverty while spending, nor of disgrace and humiliation while forgiving and being polite and courteous.

But how can a Muslim realize this subtle and difficult equilibrium, so that he may spend but not feel threatened with poverty, nor show forgiveness and feel weak, but instead gain in both prosperity and esteem? These three glad tidings can be realized only through submitting to Allah and following the Prophet, peace be upon him, and

[5] Muslim; Tirmidhi has also reported it.
[6] Qur'an 64:17
[7] Qur'an 34:39

abiding by the specified responsibilities as defined in the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. This distribution of responsibilities involves Islamic methods of administering wealth and developing society academically, intellectually, and morally. Allah has not left out anything unexplained in the Qur'an. One of the necessary conditions of following the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* is to have full respect for the means created by Allah to help people gain access to their cherished goals.

A Muslim must of necessity try to gain knowledge about areas of life pertinent to his specific share of responsibilities.

As the *Sunnah* is the exegesis of the Qur'an, the Book revealed by Allah for His servants, we shall discuss the Islamic concept of responsibility and its various dimensions in the light of textual evidence from both the Qur'an and the hadith. The following two passages of the holy Qur'an touch on the question of responsibility: Says Allah: "Alif, Lam, Mim, Sad. A book revealed unto thee. So let your heart be oppressed no more by any difficulty on that account that with it you might warn (the erring, and teach the believers). Follow (O men!) the revelation given unto you from your Lord, and follow not as friends or protectors, other than Him. Little it is you remember of admonition. How many towns have we destroyed (for their sins)? Our punishment took them on a sudden by night, or while they slept for their afternoon rest. When (thus) our punishment took them, no cry did they utter but this: 'Indeed we did wrong.' Then shall We question those to whom Our message was sent and those by whom We sent it."[8] And another place: "So hold fast to the Revelation sent down to thee: verily you are on a straight way. This (the Qur'an) is indeed the reminder (*dhikr*) for you and for your people; and soon shall ye (all) be brought to account."[9]

The expression in the first verse "then shall We question" makes it clear that our Lord Himself shall be the questioner: "He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs).[10]

Since responsibility is a comprehensive concept and applies to all men, Imam Ibn Kathir refers in this context to a tradition[11] of the Prophet which reports Ibn Umar as saying that the Prophet, peace be

[8] Qur'an 7: 1-6
[9] Qur'an 43:43-44
[10] Qur'an 21:23
[11] Ibn Mardawijah, and supported by Bukhari and Muslim with the only addition: 'then he recited the verse.'

on him, said: "Every one of you is a ruler and shall be questioned about his subjects under him. Thus the ruler shall be asked about those whom he rules, every man shall be asked about his family, and every woman about her husband's household, and the slave shall be questioned about the property of his master." Then he recited: "Then shall We question those to whom Our message was sent and those by whom We sent it." The phrase "by whom We sent it" means the Messengers of Allah and the chosen people from amongst His servants. In the phrase "this is the *dhikr* for thee and for thy people" it is not clear if the word *dhikr* means 'a source of honor' or 'a reminder' because both the meanings are complementary to each other. No honor can be achieved without abiding by the teachings of the Qur'an.

The words "hold fast to the straight way" are comprehensive and refer to the revealed pattern of behavioral responsibility and its practical realization. But nowadays many people have abandoned Revelation and are trying to develop their own codes of human conduct. It is strange that, despite tremendous progress in material science, the conventional behavioral sciences are still in an infantile stage, even though work has been going on in these fields since before the time of ancient Greece.

The responsibility for explaining the divine teachings on behavioral science must be borne by those who possess knowledge. "So hold fast to the Revelation sent down to you: verily you are on a straight way. This (the Qur'an) is indeed the Reminder (*dhikr*) for you and for your people; and soon shall you all be brought to account".[12] We shall begin by explaining the meaning of the term responsibility (*mas'uliya*) used in the Arabic language of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

[12] Qur'an 43:43-44

Chapter Two

The Definition of Responsibility

I. *The Qur'anic Perspective*

The word *mas'uliya*, "responsibility," has three elements. It requires a *sa'il*, that is, a questioner who is in a position to question others; a *mas'ul*, that is, one who is questioned or responsible; and the *suwal*, i.e. the question to be answered. This is in perfect harmony with the divine words: "Then shall We question those to Whom our Message was sent and those by whom We sent it!"[13] The explanation of the term is given in this hadith of the Prophet, peace be on him: "Each one of you is a ruler and shall be questioned about those under him. Thus the ruler shall be asked about his subjects; every man shall be questioned about his family; every woman about the household of her husband; and every slave shall be questioned about his master's property."

This is the sense of the word responsibility used throughout this book. From the texts of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* we can derive a fairly clear definition.

All people are under the obligation to accept all the values, principles, and teachings as conveyed to them by the last Prophet, peace be on him, and mould their lives accordingly. The chosen ones accept them willingly, while others reject them. This obligation is the basis of all judgement and of all reward and punishment with justice and mercy.

The words "all people" refer to the people who are accountable before Allah; the words "under obligation to Allah" refer to the Questioner who will take account of all men. "To accept" comprehends acceptance and a willing assent on the part of the servants. A detailed treatment of this subject below will show that it is for Allah to decide what burdens His servants are to bear, while the duty of the servants is to accept whatever their Lord might decide for them. This should dispel the doubts raised by some that the obligation of a Muslim scarcely leaves any option or freedom for him and that the teachings of Islam are based on compulsion.

The words "all the values, principles, and teachings" refer to the

[13] Qur'an 7:6

Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as a way of life. The words "as conveyed to them by the last Prophet" allude to propagation of Islam and dissemination of knowledge. The words "the chosen ones accept them willingly while others reject them" refer to the freedom and the choice with which human beings are endowed. And, finally, the words "This is the basis of all judgement and of reward and punishment..." bring into focus the most important aspect of responsibility, namely, that any person's reward or punishment depends on how he uses or misuses his freedom of choice and action.

When it is said that a certain person is mindful of his responsibilities or that he acts in a responsible manner or that his words are responsible, this means that he speaks with restraint and his behavior always reflects his responsibility.

When the word responsible is applied to the rulers, it brings out the essential nature of responsibility. This sense is brought out in the hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that: "Each one of you is a ruler and he shall be questioned about those under his rule."

But, people use this word for rulers without giving a thought to the question to whom are they responsible: to Allah, to the people, or to the law?

Sometimes we use the word as a warning, in which case it carries the sense of punishment. For instance, when a person is offended by another and warns that you are responsible for all that you say, the implied reference is to the punishment for what was said. Thus it is evident that punishment is one of the implications of responsibility.

Responsibility in this context covers all three of its elements. It means the authority that is able to question others and evaluate their answers and, as the case may be, give reward or punishment in the light of this assessment and commensurate with its power. Power has been mentioned here but there is a vast difference between different powers; the power of Allah is not the same as the power of his creatures and the power of different men is also not similar in degree. Responsibility always has the sense of questioning, but questioning does not necessarily convey the sense of taking account. The questioning in the present context means taking account, and in this questioning the idea of responsibility implicitly covers the three basic elements: the questioner, the one who is answerable, and the subject about which one is questioned.

After defining this sense of responsibility, we should be aware of certain specific meanings attributed to the word responsibility by

some reliable Muslim scholars in the fields of philosophy, sociology, and law.

II. *A Philosophical Perspective*

The concept of responsibility as given by a philosopher of moral behavior may be typified by the following:

> If we refer to the root of the word, we find that the expression (i.e. he is responsible) means an individual being assigned to do certain things and to give an account to a certain person. No doubt we are discussing the real responsibility, which may give this term a much wider sense, meaning doing a work even though there be no compulsion and no fear of any questioning.[14]
>
> Thus the primary sense of the word shows that the idea (of responsibility) carries a two-fold significance vis-a-vis the person who is responsible: his relationship with his works, and with those who control and supervise these works.
>
> As to the work, the term responsibility, as against the common belief, does not primarily signify a factual relationship, but a relationship that is born of a right and which must precede it in our specific judgments.
>
> Responsibility, before anything, is a natural preparedness. It is firstly, the capability of a person to force himself, and then the power to abide by his decision.
>
> Taken in this vast sense responsibility is almost synonymous with the intrinsic and most prominent trait of a human being.
>
> This viewpoint appears remarkable when the author emphasizes that religious, moral, and social responsibility is interlinked and untied. He says:
>
> Here we find three kinds of responsibility i.e. religious responsibility, social responsibility, and moral responsibility. The holy Qur'an mentions all these three responsibilities put together in one system: 'O ye that believe! betray not the trust of Allah and the Messenger, nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you. [15]
>
> We can specifically say that every responsibility is moral

[14] *See Dastur Al-Akhlaq Fil Qur'an* by Dr. Mohammad Abdullah Darraz.
[15] Qur'an 8:27

when we willingly accept it. Thus when we are given a responsibility and we accept it we become responsible for it. It is as if we had taken it upon ourselves of our own free will.

Thus it is not strange when we see that the Qur'an mentions religious responsibility as a kind of simple moral responsibility. In relation to obligatory fasting it says:

'Allah knows that you have been deceiving yourselves'. [16]

In many places, the Qur'an, while exhorting the faithful to obedience, not only emphasizes the Divine Commandment but reminds them of their pledge to obey these commandments:

'.....and (He) has indeed taken a covenant from you;' [17]
'...when you said we hear and we obey..'[18]

We can imagine an infidel on whom an obligation is imposed from outside without any sense of responsibility emerging from his own conscience. But in the case of a believer, on the contrary, neither of the two responsibilities can be found without the other, because the very first act of faith (*Iman*) necessitates the knowledge of Allah - One who alone deserves to be obeyed, loved, and worshipped by us.

We may in other words say that in order to realize the moral teachings of the Qur'an every responsibility is in essence a religious responsibility or at least flows from it.

The author has undoubtedly concluded the discussion very nicely and beautifully, yet in the early part of it he is largely influenced by the academic approaches to philosophical morals. Under their influence he asserts in certain passages, that ethical and social responsibility as defined by philosophy, ethics, and sociology is the sole purpose behind the Revelation of the Qur'an. For this he goes on quoting passages from the Qur'an in a noteworthy manner. The passage under review makes it amply clear that in the author's view the Qur'an teaches that every responsibility is a moral obligation when we volunteer for it. It is evident that his is the approach of a moral scientist.

What sort of a moral responsibility is this that has been unanimously approved and defined by moral scientists? Could these moral scientists

[16] Qur'an 2:187
[17] Qur'an 57:8
[18] Qur'an 5:7

reach a consensus of opinion on moral standards, or even on its basic principles?

The word morals has a very high place in Islam. But it defines moral obligation in a sense that necessitates non imposition of a duty from outside, making every duty a moral obligation. Islam requires from a Muslim that his desires should be subservient to its teachings. In other words, he should gladly and not reluctantly obey Allah, and feel no compulsion. But the presence of an intention to fulfil an obligation imposed by Allah is necessary to achieve the benefits and rewards of obedience to Allah.

It is a great miracle of Islam that it is able to harmonize these two elements, the obligation of man as imposed upon him from outside, and his willingness and eagerness to discharge this obligation without in the least infringing upon his freedom of choice and action.

> But Allah has endeared the Faith to you and has made it beautiful in your hearts. [19]

Anas ibn Malik relates from the Prophet, peace be on him, that one shall shall taste the flavor of faith if one: 1) holds Allah and His Messenger dearer than all else; 2) for the sake of Allah alone loves a person who does not return the love; and 3) hates lapsing into disbelief (after knowing Islam) as he would hate being thrown into the Fire. [20]

This in no way necessitates the refusal of a duty imposed from outside. On the contrary it implies service and worship to the One Who alone has the right to legislate and demand obedience.

No man is able unaided to devise or legislate absolute justice or to formulate a set of rules and obligations either for himself or for another person without the guidance of Revelation.

This is the crux of the problem. In addition to this, the greatness of this religion naturally demands that the climax of a Muslim's happiness should lie in his submission to the commandments of his Lord.

To further elucidate the point we can say that an overemphasis on agreement and harmony between man-made moral theories and the verses of the Qur'an is no different than that claimed by some people between the principles of equality and social justice as found in Islam and those presented by the proponents of scientific socialism. This style is never acceptable in Islam for *dawah* purposes.

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[19] Qur'an 49:7

[20] Bukhari & Muslim, Al-Nasa'i, Ibn Majah, and *al Masnad* of Ahmad ibn Hanbal.

However these remarks should not prevent us from doing justice to the author whose object in his own words is to acquaint Western scholars with real Qur'anic ethics.

No doubt, if Western scholars are addressed in terms with which they are familiar it will introduce them to the real beauty and grandeur of the Qur'an.

It is a source of great pleasure and elation that the final conclusion drawn by the author, excepting some of his preliminary remarks, is sound and laudable. It was his strong and deep faith and knowledge and noble character that enabled him to get over these difficulties successfully despite the hazardous method he adopted. Not every author is gifted with such talents as was this genius and pious scholar. The purpose of drawing attention to these remarks is to warn the readers against the hazard of judging the Qur'an by subjective human standards.

We are in an age when the miraculous truth of the Qur'an is more and more evident in various branches of natural and social sciences, yet some thinkers continue to take liberty with the Qur'an by trying to use it to support and justify their own whims and caprice.

III. *A Sociological Perspective*

To represent the sociological approach we have chosen a book that makes a special study of responsibility. This book, entitled *Responsibility*, by Ali Abdul Wahid Wafi, conceives of responsibility as follows:

> The phenomena of responsibility and reward are manifest in different forms. Part of responsibility is related to the man-made laws of the nations, another part is related to religious tenets of the nations, and a third part is related to its moral code. All these three parts are one in essence and lead to one definite point. Each of them emanates from the collective wisdom of the society and stems from the set of laws and regulations it adopts to support its religious, legal, and moral life.

Then the author gives the following definition of responsibility:

> So responsibility is a social phenomenon in whatever shape it appears, and it contains something that brings (benefit and) reward; in this sense it constitutes one of the topics of sociology.

The author goes on to say:

> Therefore there are no essential divisions separating these parts from one another. Man-made laws of a society and its religious doctrines are interpreted according to its moral customs, and the virtues and vices as seen by these customs are repeatedly expressed in these laws and doctrines. The elements of moral customs originate from the religious beliefs of the society as well as from the rules it sets for various spheres of life. That is why we sometimes find that a single act often entails diverse responsibilities and rewards.[21]

We note that the author has reached a conclusion very much similar to the philosophical perspective found in the book *Moral Code of the Qur'an* (Arabic), by Dr. Muhammad Abdullah Darraz. The only difference between the two views is the unavoidable distinction between ethical and sociological viewpoints. We would draw attention to the following assertions of the author: 1) the essential congruity of man-made laws with religious rules and moral codes; 2) their emanation from collective wisdom; and 3) the non-existence of any real division among these three parts.

These assertions cannot withstand the light of reason, regardless of how the reader may view the role of society and its customs and traditions, which the book describes as the origin of all these rules. While this view may be true about man-made law and moral codes, it is certainly not true concerning religion. Religion supersedes all laws, morals, and customs of a society, because it is from Allah.

IV. *A Juristic Perspective*

The legal concept of responsibility may be represented by the book, "*The Criminal Law of Islam as Compared with Man-made Law*,[22] authored by one of the leading Islamic jurists, Abdul Qadir 'Awdah, may Allah shower blessings on his soul.

His view expressed in this book is briefly as follows:

> The *shari'ah* regards moral excellence as the first pillar on which the society stands. Therefore it is keen to protect morals and vigorously safeguards them. On the contrary, man-made laws tend to ignore moral issues completely. The

[21] *Responsibility and Reward,* (Arabic) by Dr. Ali Abdul Wahid pp. 3-4

[22] *At-Tashri' Al Jina'i Al-Islami Muqaranan bil Qanunil Wad'i* (Arabic).

shari'ah is concerned about morals because it is based on religion, and religion commands good morals, while man-made laws are based on the customs and traditions of the people.

Legal responsibility in the Islamic *shari'ah* is based on free will and knowledge. Every person bears the consequences of the forbidden acts he commits while he is free and knows their implications. Criminal responsibility in the *shari'ah* is thus based on the following three principles:

1) The commission of a forbidden act;

2) The commission of an offence while one is free; and

3) The commission of an offence while one is aware of its consequences.

The Islamic jurists did not differentiate among criminal offence, disciplinary offence, and administrative mistake, as is done by the commentators of man-made law today. The reason is the nature of punishment in the Islamic *shari'ah*, and the realization of justice. In the *shari'ah*, crimes are either of *hudud*, i.e. violations of Allah's set limits, or of requital and of castigation, which call respectively for retributive or punitive measures.

An administrative mistake, while it is not the crime of *hudud* or requital, is classed under the crimes of castigation. No person may be punished twice for any single act, because the *shari'ah* admits of no artificial division among different kinds of crimes. The *shari'ah* is distinguished, in its very nature, by its clear classification of responsibilities and maintenance of justice.

On the contrary, under man-made laws a person may be punished twice for a single act. His acquittal in one of the two prosecutions will not make him immune from the second prosecution. It is argued that disciplinary action is designed to protect the integrity of one's profession or job, while the criminal case is meant for the protection of society.

No doubt, the theory of the *shari'ah* is more logical and more in consonance with modern legislative principles, which do not allow double jeopardy for a single act. It also accelerates the judicial process and reduces litigation, without undermining efficiency in meting out punishment appropriate to the crime.

> The basis of civil responsibility in the Islamic *shari'ah* is the concept that property and lives are inviolable and that anyone unlawfully injuring a person or damaging his property is liable to bear the consequence of his act. The defendant is penalized if the act of violation is punishable. If it involves financial damage he must compensate the injured party. In the case of a criminal offence a person may be punished as well as required to make compensation for the financial loss involved, e.g., hunting a privately owned animal within the precincts of *haram* or drinking the wine of a *dhimmi* (protected non Muslim subject). The offender in the last two cases is doubly liable, i.e., he is punished for hunting and drinking wine and also is forced to pay for the prey and wine.[23]

The above juristic perspective has a true Islamic cast. The author obviously takes pride in Islam. Not only does he represent the virtues of Islam as reflected in legal principles, but he also contrasts the perfection of Islamic law with the deficiencies of positivist man-made law. What a difference between the two approaches!

These examples of the moral, social, and juristic perspectives on responsibility are from books written by three leading scholars. Their best efforts have gone into these works, which represent their strong conviction and deep faith as well as their high academic achievement. These are the motives that lead to perfection. We have contrasted these three perspectives in order to clarify the meaning of responsibility to be developed in this book. The exact Islamic sense of the term can be determined only by comparing the different meanings of responsbility popular in various secular disciplines.

In our view, the essential elements of responsibility can be summed up in these words: 1) all the people are ordained by Allah to be content and satisfied with the values, principles, and commandments conveyed to them by the last Prophet, peace be on him, and to abide by them as their only way of life; 2) the faithful willingly and freely accept these while others repudiate and reject them; and 3) all people shall be called to account for their response to this message, and they shall be rewarded or punished depending on their success or failure to abide by it.

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[23] *Al-Tashri' Al-Jin'i Al-Islami*, by Abdul Qadir Awdah, vol.1, pp.73,76,392.

Comparing this definition with others, we note that it is distinct from them in that it: 1) comprehends all the elements most appropriate as the subject of this research, 2) covers the objective wisdom of other definitions but is free of their weak points, and 3) is also free from anything contrary to Islam.

In selecting these three examples of differing perspectives on responsbility our aim has been to reveal the hazards of any intellectual approach - even the most cautious approach - that seeks some sort of cohesion between Islam and man-made laws.

Chapter Three

The Degeneration of Philosophical Thought in the Views of some Secular Philosophers

Had man created himself, he could at least lay claim to chalking out his own course of life using his own mind and without the help of Revelation. But is he able to create anything at all?

> O men! here is a parable set forth! Listen! Those on whom, besides Allah, you call, could not create (even) a fly, if they all met together for the purpose. And if the fly would snatch away anything from them, they would have no power to get it back from the fly. Feeble are those who petition and those whom they petition. [24]

Man did not create himself. He did not create his mind nor did his mind create him. The Creator of man and his mind is Allah. Allah has prescribed the task and function of the human mind and in no uncertain terms has made clear its legitimate area of activity.

Revelation describes and explains things that man must know but are beyond the direct access of his mind. The human mind has certain limitations and it is futile to try to go beyond them. These are the areas where man needs help and guidance. An example of this is the question of accountability, human obligation, and other related issues. All these require legislation. Man tried to legislate on his own but strayed off course. This is where the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* come in to explain, elucidate, and guide.

Man tried to find answers to some basic questions concerning his will and freedom, but became lost in the meanderings of his labyrinthean ideas, especially between the extremes of fatalism and freewill.

We define secular philosophers as those who refuse to discuss philosophical questions from any religious standpoint. If we look into some examples of their ideological deviations, both fickle and those following a rather moderate course, we can easily perceive the contradictions and confusion. Summarizing the first three phases of Greek philosophy, in accordance with the periodic division of Ostler which began some six centuries before the birth of Christ, Dr. Abdur Rahman Badawi writes:

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[24] Qur'an 22:73

> We can briefly describe all this in these words: The Nature and Substance were, in the first phase, intermixed, with no distinction between the one and the other. In the second phase nature got separated from substance a little and it was concluded that the Real Existence was an existence superior to Nature and Substance both. Then came the third phase when more distinction between Substance and Nature was manifest until a time came when Nature was made totally independent. This is from one angle. From another angle this philosophy was constrained to establish two hypotheses: Nature is confined to itself; and there is a High Element which is completely outside Nature. This created a contradiction; because Nature cannot join this High Element, Greek Philosophy failed to resolve this contradiction which finally led to its extinction.[25]

Some historians rejected any philosophical reality. They said: 'There is no reality in philosophy; the views of different schools are conflicting and contradictory; therefore we cannot say that there is any philosophy at all.

Dr. Abdul Rahman Badawi remarks:

> These skeptics utilized this disagreement and contradiction of the philosophical schools to degrade philosophy and reject it totally. If the existence of philosophy is inevitable, then we can realize its aim only by drawing a curtain over the past and ignoring once and for all the sayings of the past generations - at least as far as interpretation is concerned - in order to analyze all our inherited ideas so as to make a fresh start for evolving a rational religion.
>
> Emerson also expressed the same view when he made nature exclaim that every moment man faces a new and a different world, and therefore he should break his links with the past and be ready to make a fresh start all over again.
>
> These views of Emerson, Descartes, and their followers imply that this futile joke has no end. Others, new thinkers, will arise and pronounce a similar judgement on Descartes and Emerson just as they did against their forerunners.
>
> No doubt the working of reason without any check is bound

[25] *Rabi'l Al Fikr Al-Yunani* (Arabic), 98

to lead to weird and contradictory views, in conflict with truth and goodness, which are the ultimate goal of all sound thinking and reasoning.

The utilitarian school of philosophy is fashionable in some quarters. Summarizing its prominent features, Dr. Tawfik Tawil says in his book *Al-Falsafat Al-Khalafiyyah*:

> Utilitarians unanimously hold that pleasure (or utility) is the ultimate good and is desired irrespective of consequences. Pain alone is the ultimate vice. This view leads to the conclusion that no human act can be good unless it realizes a profit or the doer expects a profit from it. If it leads to harm or hinders a profit, it is evil.
>
> Here Morality depends on the results of acts and their effects, and profit becomes a yardstick of good or a standard for their evaluation. Those who adopted this view included some who aimed at achieving immediate sensual pleasure or utility as individuals. These people aimed at sensual and spiritual pleasure, like the Epicureans. In all these cases, however, the aim is the achievement of individual and personal gain as in the Hobbesian School. They are all exponents of the individual or selfish school of utility (as the absolute good and ultimate purpose).
>
> Efforts were made by Francis Bacon in 1626 to transcend this school and to shift the emphasis from personal utility to public utility, but no other significant efforts in this direction are on record. What is the importance therefore of this thought in a world of morals and norms based on sacrifice and on preference for others?
>
> If we leave the traditional schools of philosophy and turn to look at the latest voice in the world of philosophy, known as existentialism, and glance at the views of some of its top proponents, we find that philosophy has remained exactly where it was before; it is still in its infancy, though it has been around almost twenty-six centuries.

Dr. Muhammad Ghallab wrote about this philosophy of existentialism and showed that it has many sections in conflict with one another. He pin-pointed such points of contradiction while describing the Russian, German, and French thinkers, both Christian and atheist, who propounded this philosophy. He has reviewed famous writers of the modern age and highlights the two atheists, i.e., Heidegger and

Jean Paul Sartre. Then he goes on to give us an evaluation of these two philosophers as made by the famous thinker, Paul Fakonet, who says:

> These two writers exceed, in difficulty, the boring books of scholastic writers. Therefore no sooner does a reader turn their pages than he feels agitated. We are convinced that the fingers of one hand are enough to count those who have had enough patience to read the *Existence and Non Existence* line by line. Still less would be the number of those who are sure that they fully understand them. Even the specialists admit they are not sure they have understood what they read.

What a great loss man inflicted upon himself when he left his thought unbridled, without checks and restrictions, on the pretext of trying to reach the truth through philosophy and independent inquiry.

Man's frustration in determining his duties and obligations on his own is quite natural, because prescribing duties that lie at the core of responsibility is not the job of man. Responsibility is ordained by Allah, for He alone has the authority to fix and decide the duties and obligations of the human beings He has created.

Therefore guidance must be sought from His revealed book, which alone can teach us the true concept of responsibility in life and its essential elements.

Our purpose in exposing this confusion among philosophers is to stress the spuriousness of the various philosophical, ethical, economic, and sociological molds or paradigms into which human thought has been pressed, no matter how crude, ambiguous, wrong, or sterile these may be. These molds are persistently imposed on the modes of research. Even many Islamic thinkers well versed in the texts of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* are constrained to tread the same path outlined by philosophers and natural moralists.

This does not mean that the prominent Muslim philosophers, particularly the religious scholars among them, propagated these philosophies along with the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* or adopted a nonchalant attitude toward them. On the contrary, they discharged their duty and repudiated these false and erroneous ideas.

We mean to say only that the molds of thought accepted in philosophy, ethics, sociology, or economics, with all their benefits and defects, are idolized to such an extent that people have no choice but to follow and abide by them. This explains why we pounce upon whatever we find in these molds that conforms to the Book of Allah in order to show its relevance to Qur'anic texts, as if it were something

original, so that the Revealed Book occupies only second place with its virtue limited to its support of our discovery.

The right course in this regard would be to present the Qur'anic teachings independently and to make comparative evaluations of human thought on the basis of the Book of Allah. If a thing is true we should accept it as it is, in accordance with the injunctions of the Almighty and with objective truth.

This attitude is necessary, because this is how we can spread the Word of Allah and repulse the ideological onslaught directed against truth and its outstanding manifestations.

The scholars of Islam known for their academic integrity took note of this attack. Dr. Abdullah Daraz writes in the preface of his book *Dustur al-Akhlaq fil Qur'an:* "A rapid glance over the books on ethics written by Western scholars is enough to show the great vacuum caused by their absolute silence on Qur'anic ethics. The fact is that these books describe the moral norms of idolatrous Greeks and the religious codes of Judaism and Christianity as the three phases of thought, but they never mention Islam and its moral code. They skip over the entire intervening Islamic period, jumping directly to the norms and principles of modern Europe."

Paul Fokonet, for example, while claiming to write on responsibility in its broader social, historical, and geographical context, completely ignores Islam and its contribution. His social, historical, and geographical survey of morals therefore can hardly be complete, which poses an obvious question. Dr. Abdullah Darraz records his impression in these words:

> We are astonished to note that the author in all his long march from China to Morocco, from the seventh century until today walked alongside Islamic societies without stopping within them. All of his concern was to go around and circumvent them, despite the fact that the study of these Islamic groups of people, which represent a sizable number of the population of the globe, cannot be ignored. These societies faced few difficulties and complications, because their life enjoyed a unique conformity with their basic law. They lived right in front of Western eyes and Europe had economic and political relations with them.
>
> Probably Paul Fokonet was personally ignorant of the injunctions of Islamic *shari'ah* in this regard, although he has referred to them indirectly. We are not concerned with the

motive that led him to this deliberate omission, but we cannot help remarking that the omission left his inductive study incomplete.[26]

The dangers of Fokonet's attitude are not confined to a mere denial of the contribution of Islam and the Muslims. It is a dishonest attempt to hide the treasures of Islam and its glaring realities. Besides, he draws a completely erroneous conclusion when he says that restriction of responsibility to an adult and free person is the result of European reason alone, the cause being development, advancement, and knowledge. We can quite easily read in this statement an obvious attempt to deny the superiority and precedence of Islam in this field. Not content with this, he accuses Islam of stagnation, backwardness, and incapacity to organize human life in all ages and in all places. Fokonet claims that he has covered and examined all criminal laws down the ages and in many societies, from Australian tribes and the tribal societies of North Africa to modern Europe passing through China, Brahminic India, Persia, Children of Israel, Greece, Teutons, Romans, and groups of Christian peoples, but he ends up by drawing a completely erroneous conclusion which he presents as gospel truth.

A fact that must have been known to Paul Fokonet is that the Islamic *shari'ah,* without any need for further development over the course of thirteen centuries, was the only one that presented rules different and quite distinct from anything to be found in the customs and traditions of the societies which Fokonet studied. The rules set forth by the Islamic *shari'ah* maintained that a sleeping person cannot be held responsible until he wakes up, just as a mad person cannot be held accountable until he recovers or a child until he comes of age. Similarly it was this very *shari'ah* that laid down the rule that Inflicting injury on animals is a tyranny and a cruelty, while Europe for a long time thereafter continued to pass legal sentences against inanimate things and condemned many animals to imprisonment, fire, or execution.

It is a pity that the study of responsibility by Fokonet in

[26] Ibid., p.227

> which he absolutely ignored Islam is looked upon as a model by specialists in Islamic studies, who follow his example, methods, and pattern and eulogize his work.

Commenting on the way Paul Fokonet has dealt with the subject of responsibility and reward, Dr. Ali Abdul Wahid writes:

> This method conforms totally and in most of its details to the method followed by the great scholar Fokonet in his valuable book on responsibility, and the theory with which we shall conclude has been in most part borrowed from his theory.[27]

Now the question is how long shall we remain prisoners of these academic idols despite their incapacity and failure, while we possess the invaluable treasures of wisdom, superior values, principles, and verities derived from the Book of Allah which brings forth nothing but good and is free from any falsehood whatever.

The time has come to free ourselves from the fetters of this conventional logic, which has turned us into blind followers who accept the faulty human methods that time and again have been shown to be inefficient, bankrupt, and unreliable. We must reject those who are blinded by their own ineptitude and narrow outlook and who therefore persistently ignore the rich and beautiful principles of Islam.

The burden of bringing about an intellectual awakening sufficient to re-introduce us to the outlook and approach set out in the book of Allah lies on the scholars. It is for them to remove the present confusion in thought, which has come to be seen as something ideal and necessary. The fact is that it is not for any man to determine obligations and responsibilities for other men. This involves legislation and is the exclusive prerogative of our Divine Sovereign, Allah. "But say not - for any false things that your tongues may put forth - this is lawful and this is forbidden so as to ascribe false things to Allah, for those who ascribe false things to Allah will never prosper."[28]

The word false has been repeated thrice in this verse. Those who give their opinions about responsibility without any reference to the book of Allah and rely on their own intellectual prowess seek to do something which is best left to the book of Allah, for otherwise they would wrong themselves and mislead others.

The intellectual scene in philosophy, ethics, economics, social

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[27] *Responsibility and the Reward* (Arabic), by Dr. Ali Abdul Wahid Wafi, 7.
[28] Qur'an 16:116

sciences, and law has witnessed a tremendous expansion of these branches of knowledge. At one extreme in this expansion we find thinkers who are engaged in purely speculative thinking with little or no connection with reality, while at the other extreme many are completely engrossed in the material comforts and pleasures of life. Each school of thought criticizes and exposes the faults and weak points of its rivals without noticing its own, but the mutual process of critique reveals the bankruptcy of them all.

Chapter Four

The Qur'an and the Co-relation Between Economic and Religious Development

The major duty of Muslims is to have confidence in Allah and then in themselves and in the resources and potentialities that Allah has bestowed upon them. With this confidence, they can do a lot to empower Islam, themselves, and their *Ummah.* If only they wake up from their slumber and have faith in Allah, they still may realize their hopes and responsibilities to support the good and oppose the bad throughout the world.

The main problem of man today, particularly in the Muslim world, is that he has lost himself and is oblivious to the vast capabilities and potentialities that Allah has given him.

In this respect man stands almost alone. No other species seem to suffer from this state of self-oblivion. All living beings, except man, actively pursue their natural instincts without any laxity or negligence.

The Qur'an tells us that the immediate cause of this human malaise lies in man's aversion to his Creator: "And be ye not like those who forgot Allah and He made them forget their own souls."[29]

This verse shows that self-forgetfulness is at once a sin and a punishment - a punishment very much like the sin in nature - for forgetting Allah.

Other verses bring out in somewhat greater detail, the same sense. They tell us that the sin of forgetting Allah and aversion to His Message always causes hardship in this world and darkness in the Hereafter.

> But whosoever turns away from My Message, verily for him is a life narrowed down and We shall raise him up blind on the Day of Judgement. He will say: "O My Lord! why have You raised me up blind, while I had sight (before)?" (Allah) will say: "When Our signs came unto you, you disregarded them; so will you, this day, be disregarded.[30]

Obviously the worldly punishment mentioned in this verse refers

[29] Qur'an 59:19
[30] Qur'an 20:124-126

primarily to economic hardship in this life, which is difficult to bear and is a punishment, both material and psychological.

Forgetfulness of Allah causes self-forgetfulness and self-forgetfulness in turn, as explained in the latter verse, adversely affects the economy and human psychology. Economic disruption and psychological confusion is the direct result of neglecting the causes of growth and stability. Neglecting these causes is directly related to the resources and capabilities that Allah has bestowed upon man. Trouble comes when man underestimates and neglects these, for it leads to waste, despair, and humiliation, and ultimately to losing sight of the Right Path altogether. The Qur'an describes economic disruption and psychological disorder as the direct result of denying the bounties of Allah:

> Allah sets forth a parable, a city enjoying security and quiet, abundantly supplied with sustenance from every place: yet was it ungrateful for the favors of Allah: So Allah made it taste of hunger and terror (in extremes, closing in on it) like a garment (from every side) because of (the evil) which its people wrought. [31]

Hunger and terror, portrayed in this verse as one garment, are, when covering man, not only felt but tasted as well. True indeed is the word of Allah. Hunger and terror are among the most bitter things one can ever experience. It is evident that this punishment is related to the same causes. The last verse uses the expression "ungrateful for the favors of Allah." Ingratitude means to reject favors and leads to their loss. In this case, the human capabilities and potentialities remain unutilized because of this rejection. This non-use brings on the same malady as in the above verses.

These facts have been described in the Qur'an in different ways but their message is essentially the same, as for example in this verse: "If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should have indeed opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth but they rejected (the truth) and we took them to task for their misdeeds." [32]

The blessings from heaven and earth, i.e., the gifts bestowed by Allah on man are innumerable. The Creator has granted us enormous mental, psychic, and material potentialities, which, when rightly

[31] Qur'an 16:112
[32] Quran 7:96

exploited enable us to achieve such astounding successes as baffle the imagination.

A most clear and undeniable proof of this is the contribution that the Muslims made to mankind's welfare in the early period of Islam. This early history can repeat itself if some really sincere people are determined to achieve honor and prosperity in this life and in the life hereafter. The inefficiency, negative outlook, negligence, and carelessness that are featured in the life of modern man have not the remotest relationship with faith and piety; on the contrary they are the inevitable result of forgetting Allah through loss of faith and piety, as described in the above verse. Belief and fear of Allah go together with His remembrance and with the remembrance of His blessings on man and call for their best possible utilization by man, which is a necessary condition for more and more blessings from Allah and for prosperity and peace of heart and mind.

But why do these verses stress material prosperity and the peace, security, and tranquility that always accompany it whenever human efforts and resources are sincerely molded and positively directed in accordance with the teachings of Islam?

The answer lies in the wisdom that seeks to focus the attention of Muslims on the great impact of practical everyday life on the mind and heart of every person, in accordance with the law laid down by our Creator. Needless to say, practical life is almost entirely interwoven with our economic life. Heaven and earth, mentioned above as the sources of these blessings, contain the answer to the economic as well as the psychological problems of man. The main points of these verses may be summarized in the following words:

1) Economic advancement and ruin depend on whether man remembers or forgets Allah, for the Qur'an affirms that materially the life of man must be governed by Islam. In other words, the observance of Allah's laws in economic matters is the surest way to economic prosperity.

2) The effects of following the Islamic principles in the economic field in a short space of time encourage and promote the true features of an Islamic society, for the life of a people is always closely and directly inter-woven with their economy. These are reflected in their psychological state, in the way they consent or dissent, in their mental condition, in their contentment or otherwise, and in their moral health, their abiding by what is *"halal"* (lawful), and their avoidance

of *"haram"* (forbidden) things, and their preference for the promised rewards of Allah in the hereafter instead of the wealth of this world. This great and direct influence of economic life gives it a foremost place among the responsibilities of each and every Muslim.

3) The present chaos in faith, worship, and morals, and the confusion, sense of helplessness, weakness, and dependence on others, from which the vast majority of Muslims suffer both individually and collectively, are the direct result of their failure to follow the teachings of Islam in the economic field, a fact that has played an important part in divorcing the rituals of worship from their mundane life.

4) The Muslims cannot rid themselves from this state of confusion unless they return to the real teachings of their religion, and the only way to do this is to enforce them in their practical life with sincere faith in their truth. Economic action is the nerve center of this life and through it alone we can achieve stability and balance in life. Every Muslim who hopes to meet his Lord must work to change this pattern of economic life in accordance with His will.

5) A Muslim has within himself enormous energies and potentials, both visible and invisible. He has both hidden and apparent gifts. These gifts, if employed properly are enough to secure for him prosperity. It is this hidden source of strength that enables him to obey Allah, the Almighty, in the face of various difficulties. The day Muslims discover these powers, they will surely be cured of their neglect of Allah and of their ownselves, and will march onto the right path with confidence in their hearts that Allah is with them.

We must realize that Muslims in general have strayed far away from these Qur'anic teachings. In their absence no vital change can be expected. Faith in one's self and confidence in the potentialities and capabilities given to one by Allah is for many a mere idea without any meaning. The result is that helplessness and weakness are termed "fear of Allah," and a negative approach is called piety, while laxity and submissiveness are looked upon as spirituality, and hypocrisy is described as high morality. Instead of trust in Allah we meet with indifference. Many Muslims of today are in such a condition of decline that only Allah can deliver them from it.

The most abhorrent thing is that admonition is turned into weeping

and crying and exhortation has become a convulsion or a scream. This picture should suffice to clarify our point. Let us now consider how we can bring about a radical change to remedy this situation.

The Qur'an describes the first principle:

> Verily, never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.[33]

Let everyone start with himself, reforming, and correcting his own self first. Beginning with one's own self is like laying down the foundations. My appeal here is to all Muslims, especially those with a strong conviction, to come forward and work toward the actual application of the natural law of Islam in the present conditions of life.

Are we really capable, with the power to realize our aims and objectives?

In the presence of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* we do not have to wander in search of our answer. It is already there, if we but care to look into the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* to discover our real strength and potentialities.

The details of this answer may require scores of pages, but its prime elements are a strong faith and conviction, free of any shade of doubt.

Allah has bestowed upon us, in the form of His Book and the *Sunnah,* a fountain-head that shall never run dry. They give us true knowledge to quench our thirst. We shall deal with these various elements in the following pages.

We pray to Allah that He may open up our hearts to the Truth, grant us strong belief, help us tread the straight path, and save us from pitfalls and errors. He indeed it is Who answers the prayers of His servants!!

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[33] Qur'an 13:11

PART TWO

Freedom: The Key to Islamic Self-Development

Chapter One

Freedom

I. A Brief Description
II. Freedom and the Nature of Human Development
III. Analysis of the Texts

Chapter Two

The Development of Potentialities and Capabilities

I. The Prerequisites of Accountability in the *Shari'ah*
II. The Comprehensiveness of Legal Provisions
III. Building a Responsible Personality Before Adulthood
IV. A Model of Social Development
V. The Signs of Puberty as the Age of Legal Responsibility
VI. Mental and Physical Capability for Responsibility

Chapter One

Freedom

I. *A Brief Description*

Freedom in Islam is a multi-dimensional concept. Freedom enables man to bear the consequences of his acts, because freedom gives man choice in his actions.

While discussing the most salient features of the freedom of the human will let us not forget, for one moment, that this freedom is one of the most precious blessings of Allah given to His servants. This great bounty involves the power of intention and the power to choose and follow the path of either good or evil. This freedom concerns man's intention, capabilities, and resources. The fact that man is completely free in this sphere in no way conflicts or contradicts the supreme or the absolute power of Allah.

Perfection of human power in the physical world has many aspects and involves a harmony among its diverse elements. The multiplicity of these aspects and the harmony of the parts in perfecting man's capabilities and free will reflect the originality and beauty of the Divine order, but they cannot be attributed to the eternal attributes of Allah for they imply the presence of a defect. This rules out their attribution to Allah as such. He is perfect and needs no perfection.

A cursory glance at the physical and moral endowments of man is enough to show that they are the bounties given and created by Allah. While all creatures do need and benefit from these gifts of Allah, He is above them and does not stand in need of them; they cannot be His attributes.

Similarly if we ponder a little we can realize that the religious duties imposed upon man by Allah are commensurate with his capabilities. They vary and differ according to the power of individual persons to bear them. The Qur'anic rule in this respect is quite clear: "On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear."[34] This variance in obligations among different persons not only indicates Divine Justice, but proves that man and his faculties are a creation of Allah. Neither he nor his faculties had any existence until Allah brought them into existence.

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[34]Qur'an 2:286

This power of man as a creation, with so many dimensions and such diversity in its parts at different levels, and yet functioning as a unit with a harmony of its own, is all a creation of Allah and reflects the perfection of the creative power of Allah, the Almighty.

But this power and capability, despite all the evidence of perfection in creatures, is far from being perfect in the absence of an All-Powerful Creator. For all their qualities of excellence, creatures remain as dependent on their Creator as ever. The distinctive prominence bestowed upon man among other forms of creation is enough to show his helplessness and complete dependence on his Originator. There is no comparison then between these two powers and wills. The difference between these two powers is sufficient to refute the fatalistic view about which some naive people still continue to wrangle.

Fatalistic views cannot stand the light of reason. Their spuriousness is obvious, because they contradict the very wisdom that required man to be endowed with these capabilities and obligations. Both the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* emphatically repudiate such views. In the discussion of Divine Will and man's free will we will shall show that the two are not incompatible with each other.

Islam has dealt with this issue and elucidated it in a marvelous manner. The texts of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* fully cover this topic and dispel all the doubts and confusions that caused many people to stray off the straight path in the past. In this chapter we shall take up the most salient features of this topic in the light of the *Sunnah* and the Qur'an.

After reviewing some texts from the Qur'an that deal with this subject, it should be clear to us that freedom or free choice given to man and all the related gifts are features brought into existence by Allah and in a most marvelous way.

II. *Freedom and the Nature of Human Development*

Any assertion that the human intellect alone is responsible for human development attributes to it something beyond its capacity. The human mind is unable to discover the secrets enshrouded in the mist of history. The ruins of many civilizations, all the works of our ancestors, are found and studied and yet man is unable to understand them fully. A few thousand years are a very short span of time in the life of the universe, yet man is unable to trace or record this recent history. How then can he understand and unravel the mysteries of the entire history of his species. The pyramids of ancient Egypt, for

example, are the remnants of a unique past civilization. Eminent scholars of various nationalities have studied and analyzed them. Despite the use of the latest scientific devices, including laser photos, the largest pyramid remains a mystery and a challenge to human ingenuity. We do not know for sure even how they cemented these huge stones together. Researchers are still busy exploring newly found rooms. What ingenious device lifted these heavy stones to such heights? All we can do is to speculate and conjecture.

If the human mind is unable to unravel the mysteries of a distant past of which various traces and works can be seen, how can it then penetrate into the secrets of ages that passed before man even came into existence? When the pagans transgressed the bounds of reason, Allah told them: "I called them not to witness the creation of the heavens and the earth nor (even) their own creation.[35]

The people who tried to unravel the mystery of the origin of man by their own reasoning alone were bound to go astray. Not only did the truth become a casualty in the process but man himself became lost in his own unchecked and unbridled reasoning, which poisoned his whole thinking about his origin and morals.

In his perplexity, rationalistic man concluded that he originated only from monkeys and was a born sinner. After the human intellect lost its bearings, it rejected guidance from the Revelation preceding the Qur'an because the bearers of the books of Revelation had long before lost the original teachings of their Prophets. Over the course of centuries they lost or hid portions of the books and changed and distorted the remaining text. They taught that every man is a born sinner. One error led to another and the children of Adam were condemned wholesale for an act they never committed. They tried to rescue man from the curse of this original sin in a manner that was even more bizarre and more obnoxious. This was the concept of redemption and deliverance of humanity at the hand of an outsider, not from amongst the children of Adam, but by a "son" of Allah, *subhanahu wa ta'ala'*. Surely, Allah is far above what they attribute to Him!

The myth of a crucified son proved a death blow for truth, justice, and morality, as it had a little earlier already stifled thinking and blocked the way to the revealed guidance. This error distorted human thought in three basic spheres of human relationships, i.e., man's

[35]Qur'an 18:51

relationship with his Lord, with His Prophets, and with himself. Specifically:

1) They lost belief in the unity of Allah in particular, and in His absolute perfection free from any defect.

2) They no longer believed in the Prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad, peace be on them both, and their views on the rest of the Prophets also became distorted,

3) Consequently, they lost the right concept about themselves and about man, his origin, nobility, and goodness, and his responsibility.

Thus they cut themselves off from the holy Qur'an, the last among the books of Allah, the protection of which against distortion or change is guaranteed by Allah. This severed their most valuable means of access to greater knowledge of Allah, His Prophets, especially the last Prophet, and themselves. The last of these three points is the subject of this discussion, i.e., the beginning of man's development from the perspective of Islam.

First let us remember that the chief advantage of abiding by the Qur'anic texts is that we thereby avoid the mistakes committed by non-Muslims and by those Muslims who followed others blindly and failed to draw a line between matters that the human mind could independently grasp and those that it could not. Keeping this essential distinction in view, we find that the Qur'anic texts are the most important means of attaining correct knowledge of our origin, about which there are no records or documents but which is nonetheless man's most pressing need; he needs someone who can tell him about his origin in clear terms and with certainty.

The importance and advantage of correct knowledge is quite obvious, especially for the focus of our study, which is the nature and role of this knowledge as a vital element in the study of human responsibility.

Contrary to the perverted views of man's origin and moral nature, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* show beyond any doubt that the natural disposition of man is essentially moral, which underscores what has been the essence of humanity since the very first day of man's creation. "O Mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord who created you from a single person, created of like nature his mate and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women."[36]

[36]Qur'an 4:1

The first meaning of this verse is that man is a being naturally inclined to good. It may also have a second meaning, namely, that man has been a responsible being since the very first day of his creation, and that he did not emerge from a simian or any other intermediary phase of evolution.

This concept is more appealing, because it honors man as a being fit to shoulder responsibilities rather than incapacitating him by telling him that he is a born sinner and under an abiding curse requiring absolution from the burden of his responsibility by equally sinful intermediaries, a caste of priests. Can there be any worse case of deviation or corruption of thinking than this?

Islam brought with it revealed guidance to free man from these indignities and to restore his dignity to him. A general principle that stresses the nobility and high status of man among the other forms of creation is stated in these words of Allah:

> We have honored the sons of Adam; provided
> them with transport on land and sea; given
> them for sustenance things good and pure; and
> conferred on them special favors, above a
> great part of Our Creation.[37]

This verse refers to the superiority of man over the angels. Abdullah ibn 'Umar relates that the Prophet, peace be on him, remarked: "Angels said: 'O Our Lord! You gave the world to the children of Adam; there they eat, drink, and put on clothes. We praise thee; we do not eat, do not drink, and do not play. Make the Hereafter for us as Thou made the world for them.' He said: 'I shall not make the pious progeny of those I created with Mine own hands like one about whom I said: "Be and he was."'"[38]

Imam Ibn Kathir has narrated some traditions similar to this hadith related from Ibn Abi Hatim, on the authority of Abdullah ibn 'Umar. He says that a similar tradition has been related by Imam 'Uthman ibn Said al-Darami in his book, *Al-Radd-Ala at Jahamiyyah*, while commenting on the verse: "And those foremost (in faith) will be foremost (in the Hereafter). These will be those nearest to Allah; in gardens of Bliss."[39]

The following words of Allah also underscore the nobility of man:

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[37] Qur'an 17:70
[38] Al-Hafiz Al-Tabrani and Ibn Asakir
[39] Qur'an 56:10-12

"By the Fig and the Olive, and the Mount of Sinai, and this city of security, we have indeed created man in the best of molds."[40]

The words of the Almighty, "We have indeed created man in the best of molds," is the complement of the oath. This phrase signifies that Allah created mankind with the best nature and in the best size and form, gave him reason and knowledge, and endowed him with a free will and various capabilities and faculties, like sight, speech, and reason.

The clearest proof of the superiority of Adam is found in Surah Al-Baqarah. Commenting on the words of Allah: "And He taught Adam the names of all things," Ibn Kathir says that in this verse Allah has emphasized the superiority of Adam to the angels. Explaining this verse, Imam Bukhari relates from Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The believers will gather on the Day of Judgement and say: 'We wish we could have some one for intercession with our Lord!' Then they will come to Adam and will say: 'You are the father of all men. Allah created you with His own hands and made angels bow to you, and taught you the names of all things. So please intercede for us with Your Lord.'"[41]

And about the verse, "and behold, we said to the angels: 'Bow down to Adam!' and they bowed down," Ibn Kathir says, "This is the greatest honor Allah gave to Adam, that He ordered the angels to bow down to him."

These texts from the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet make it amply clear that Islam treats man with kindness and refers to his origin in very kind terms. This Islamic view is in total conformity with the facts of nature. According to this view, man has been created with a degree of sublimity in him; in fact he is superior to angels, who have a high station with Allah, the Almighty. This is shown by the fact that Allah selected Prophets and Messengers from among men.

If these texts in principle qualify man to shoulder the highest degrees of responsibility, other texts clearly outline the scrupulous details of this responsibility. We reproduce here some of these verses and traditions:

> We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being

[40] Qur'an 95:1-4

[41] Besides Bukhari this hadith is also recorded by Muslim, Al-Nasa'i, and Ibn Majah.

> afraid thereof: but man undertook it; he is indeed unjust and foolish.[42]

Ibn Abbas says that the trust signifies obedience. Others also support this view. It is also related from him that he took it to signify religious duties. Others like Mujahid, Dhahhak, and Hasan Basri supported his view.

Qatadah says that the trust means prayer, fasting, and taking a ritual bath for purification. Ibn Kathir comments that these views are not mutually conflicting but are in mutual agreement with one another and signify assignment and acceptance of all commands and prohibitions.

Sheikh Makhluf summaries the views of different commentators about this verse in these words: "The phrase 'We did indeed offer the Trust' signifies obligations and religious duties, or any thing given as a trust bidding or forbidding certain things concerning religion or worldly affairs. It has been called a trust because it signifies certain duties that Allah has imposed on man and bidden him to perform sincerely and faithfully.

Qurtabi relates from Qaffal and others that the offer in this verse is a parable. It means that the heavenly bodies, despite their greatness, if encumbered with the burden of *shari'ah* would have failed to follow it because of the punishment and reward that is implied therein. In other words this obligation is beyond the capacity of the heavens and of the earth and the mountains. This burden was shouldered only by man, who is *unjust* and *foolish*. There are many such parables in the Qur'an.

It is also said that this verse is metaphorical and it means that when "We measured the burden of the trust with the strength of the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, we found them weak and unable to bear it, and were they able to speak they would surely have refused!" This sense is implicit in the words that speak of offering the trust. It is like saying in Arabic *"Aradhatul himla 'alal ba'eer fa abahu,"* (literally, I offered the burden to the camel but it refused to bear it). In simple words this means I assessed the strength of the camel and found that it would not be able to bear it.[43]

It is clear that the first view is not against the views related by Ibn Kathir. According to still another opinion, this verse is a sort of

[42] Qur'an 33:72

[43] Sheikh Makhluf, *Safwatul Bayyan Li Ma'an il Qur'an,* (Arabic).

figurative expression. We shall comment on it at the end of this discussion, insha'Allah. Allah says in the Qur'an:

> Behold, your Lord said to the angels,
> "I will create a Khalifa (vicegerent) on earth!"[44]

Khalifa or vicegerent means one who acts on behalf of someone else. This verse refers to Adam, who was the vicegerent of Allah on earth, and also to all the other Prophets whom Allah made His vicegerents, one after the other, to run the affairs of people and enforce His will toward them. It is also said that the verse refers to Adam and his progeny in successive generations who inhabited the earth. The Qur'an mentions Adam, but not his progeny.

Sheikh Makhluf considers it the very crux of the problem, but Ibn Kathir disagrees with this opinion. He says: "Here the word 'vicegerent' does not refer to Adam only, for if this were so, the saying of the angels 'wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood' would have been quite out of place. The angels meant that there will be people of the human race who will commit all these things."

Ibn Kathir narrates many views regarding the meaning of vicegerency and the nature of the knowledge of the angels regarding mischief and bloodshed.

Whether it be the vicegerency of Allah Himself intended by Him for the people, or the vicegerency of people among themselves, handed down for centuries through generations of man, or the vicegerency of some of their ancestors, or even of the jinns, as related by Ibn Jarirr from Ibn Abbas, vicegerency as such implies certain responsibilities. Therefore this verse is a clear proof that mankind from the very beginning has been qualified to shoulder any responsibility. This responsibility and the Divine words about it existed long before man's creation. Says Ibn Kathir: "Allah reminds the members of mankind of His favor upon them when He informs them that He mentioned them to the angels before their creation."

A study of the text as given in Surah Al-Hijr shows that Allah created Adam after He had already spoken to the angels. "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeidance unto him."[45]

Other places in the Qur'an also show that all people are born

[44] Qur'an 2:30
[45] Qur'an 15:29

innocent and unblemished by any sin. Thus we read: "So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the religion of pure Islamic faith; the pure Islamic nature with which he has created mankind; no change (let there be) in the work (wrought by Allah; that is the standard religion; but most among mankind understand not."[46]

In the phrase "the pure Islamic nature with which He has created mankind," the word "nature" means the power to recognize and accept the *din* or true religion. It also means the religion of Islam and pure monotheism. This verse tells us that Allah, the Almighty, has created man with a nature that enables him to accept and follow true religion. And that is why man is attracted to it, if he is not carried away by his whims and caprices.

This point has been well explained by the Prophet(s) who said: "No new born baby is born but with a (pure) nature, and then his parents make it a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."[47]

Even before birth, when man is merely an embryo in the womb of his mother, certain responsibilities are prescribed for him. Bukhari relates on the authority of Zaid ibn Mas'ud that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Each one of you is collected in the womb of his mother for forty days, and then turns into a clot for an equal period (of forty days), and turns into a piece of flesh for a similar period (forty days) and then Allah sends an angel and orders him to write four things, i.e., his provision, his age at death, and whether he will be of the wretched or the blessed (in the hereafter). Then the soul is breathed into him. And by Allah, a person among you (or a man) may do deeds of the People of the Fire until there is only a cubit or an arm-breadth distance between him and the fire but then the writing precedes, and he does the deeds of the People of Paradise and enters it; and a man does the deeds of the People of Paradise till there is only a cubit or two between him and Paradise, and then that writing precedes and he does the deeds of the People of the Fire and enters it."[48]

It is wrong to think that this tradition is in conflict with the capability of man for responsibility. This hadith purports to underline three things:

First, it warns pious people against such evils as may vitiate their

[46] Qur'an 30:30

[47] Bukhari and Muslim

[48] Bukhari, who mentions it at more than one place, Ahmed, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah.

good deeds, like pride, vainglory, hypocrisy, and other hidden evils that can render all of a person's good deeds in vain.

Second, it gives hope to those who have wronged themselves, for it is still possible for them to substitute the honor that always goes with obedience to Allah's will for the humiliation that accompanies sin. This assurance is likely to strengthen their resolve at a crucial moment and change their attitude from evil to good.

Third, it draws the attention of both the faithful and the sinful to Allah. If one seeks help from Allah and places trust in Him, one's hidden capabilities and faculties develop and one finds it easy to perform the acts that please Allah, while keeping away from those that invoke His wrath.

This three-fold purpose creates in man a sense of responsibility that leads him onto the right path.

The basis of responsibility, according to the Qur'an, is laid even before various phases of embryonic development are completed in the mother's womb: "When thy Lord drew forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying) 'Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you?,' they said, 'Yes! We do testify to (this), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgement: Of this we were never mindful!'"[49]

Ibn Kathir says: "Allah informs us here that he called forth the progeny of Adam from their loins and made them testify that He is their Lord and that there is no deity except Him, for He created them with this knowledge as a necessary part of their natural disposition." He explained this verse in the light of the above mentioned verse (30:30) from Surah Al-Rum. He quotes many traditions on the meaning of the pure (Islamic) nature with which Allah created mankind. Among them is one related by Ibn Jarir on the authority of Hasan ibn Abu al Hasan who, relating it from Aswad bin Sari, reports him as saying: "I attended four wars with the Prophet. Some people killed children after they had finished off the enemy warriors. When the holy Prophet, Peace be on him, was told about this he was displeased and said: 'What is wrong with the people who kill children?' A man said: 'O Prophet of Allah! Were they not the children of the polytheists?' He said: 'The best among you are the children of the polytheists. No child is born except with the pure Islamic nature, and he remains in it

[49]Qur'an 7:172

until he starts speaking. Then his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian.''' Hasan also refers to the verse, ''When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam...'' (7:172).

Imam Ahmad relates, on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet said: ''On the Day of Judgement a man from among the People of the Fire shall be asked: 'If you possessed something of what is on the earth would you ransom yourself with it?' He will say: 'Yes.' Thereupon Allah will say to him: 'I asked you to do something far easier than this. I drew you forth from the loins of Adam and took a covenant from you not to associate any one with Me, but you refused.'''[50]

Ibn Kathir has quoted a number of traditions, which he summarizes in these words: ''These traditions show Allah did draw forth the children of Adam from the loins of Adam and distinguished the People of the Fire from the would-be People of Paradise, and the evidence against them was their confession that he was their Lord. But this is found only in the hadith transmitted by Kalthum ibn Jubair who relates it from Sa'eed ibn Jubair and he from Ibn Abbas or from Abdullah ibn Amr, but both of these are *mauquf* (i.e., there is a break in their chain of authorities), and they cannot be traced back to the Prophet. Then he goes on to say that scholars of the former and the later periods have said: ''The 'evidence' here means their pure (Islamic) nature in which knowledge and belief in One true God (Tawhid) is firmly ingrained.'' We quoted these two *mauquf* ahadith (that are untraceable to the Prophet directly) to clarify the issue by noting the following:

Imam Ahmad narrates from Ibn Abbas that he said the Prophet said: ''Allah took a covenant from the (children of Adam drawing them forth from the) loins of Adam at 'Numan' on the Day of Arafa. He gathered all of them before Him and then asked them: 'Am I not your Lord, (Who cherishes and sustains you)? They answered, 'Yes! We do testify (to this)!' (Allah said: We reminded you of this) 'lest you should say on the Day of Judgment, ''of this we were never mindful,'' or lest you should say, ''our fathers before us may have taken false gods, and we were but their descendants after them; wilt Thou then destroy us because of the deeds of those inventors of falsehoods?'''[51]

Ibn Kathir says, ''This hadith has been narrated by Nasa'i in the Book of Exegesis in his collection, on the authority of Husain ibn Muham-

[50] Bukhari and Muslim
[51] Qur'an 7:172-173

mad al-Maruzi, and also by Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abi Hatim on the basis of the hadith of Husain ibn Muhammad, and others on the authority of Jarir ibn Hazim who relates it from Kulthum ibn Jubair.'' He remarks that its authorities are sound. It has also been narrated by Abdul Warith from Ibn Abbas as a *mauquf* hadith. Similarly it has also been related by Isma'il ibn Ilya from Waki who related it from Rabia ibn Kulthum who related it from Jubair who relates from his father in similar words.

Likewise it has also been narrated by Attar ibn Al-Saib, Habib ibn Thabit, and Ali ibn Badhima who related it from Sa'id ibn Jubair who relates from Ibn Abbas. Also Al'Awfi and 'Ali Abi Talha related it from Ibn Abbas. This is more authentic, but Allah knows best. Ibn Jarir on the authority of Ibn Abbas says: ''Allah brought out the children of Adam from his loins in the form of a seed, in filthy water (semen).'' He goes on to say that, ''Ali ibn Sahl narrates on the authority of Jabir who said: 'A six day old son of Dahhak ibn Mazajim died. He said: ''O Jabir! When you have placed my son in the grave, raise his face, and untie his knots, because my son will be raised to sit upright and will be questioned.'' I did as was told. When I finished I asked: ''May Allah bless you, what will your son be questioned about and who will question him?'' He said, ''He will be questioned about the pledge he took while he was in the loins of Adam.'' Thereupon I asked, ''O Abul Qasim! What was the pledge he took while he was in the loins of Adam?'' He said, ''Ibn Abbas narrated that Allah stroked the loins of Adam and drew forth all the people He was going to create until the Day of Judgement. Then He took from them a covenant that they would worship Him alone and would never ascribe partners to Him. He guaranteed for them sustenance and then He returned them back to his loins. The Day of Judgement will not be held until every one who has taken this convenant is born. One who attains the age of the second pledge and fulfills it shall benefit from the first pledge, and one who reaches this stage but does not fulfill the second pledge shall find no benefit from the first pledge. One who dies, however, while he is young and does not reach the age of the second pledge dies on the first pledge, i.e., while his nature is pure!''

We can derive from these and other similar texts the conclusion that the responsibility has been inherent in the nature of man since the very first day of his coming into existence and is encompassed by many blessings and benedictions.

Any ideological deviation that may damage and pervert this unchan-

geably pure nature of man is of no consequence whatsoever. Any claim contrary to this is false and without any truth. Allah created man with a pure nature and there can be no change in the creation of Allah.

III. *Analysis of the Texts on "Trust," "Vicegerency," and "Testimony"*

The texts mentioned above establish our basic approach toward the question of responsibility and focus our attention on the following three texts:

1) The word "trust" in Qur'an (33:72) has been explained by earlier commentators as obligations and religious duties, or as obedience or worship as in prayer and fasting. Rationally and linguistically its use has also been explained in a figurative sense.

2) The word "vicegerent" we have discussed above, as used in Qur'an (2:30) and as viewed by the commentators and scholars who discussed the vicegerency of people as a community and of jinn. We must also discuss the subsequent question of the angels, "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?" and the answer to this question, whereby Allah taught the (names) nature of things to Adam, and caused the angels to admit their inability to answer questions regarding the nature of the created world.

3) What is the nature of the "testimony" referred to in Qur'an (7:172), where Allah says: "When thy Lord drew forth from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves (saying): 'Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?' and they said: 'Yes!'.. ." And what are the different views about the nature of this testimony, i.e., does it imply a covenant taken from human beings while still in the stage of seminal fluid or does it refer to the creation of man with the pure (Islamic) nature of monotheism?

These three texts, respectively, on trust, vicegerency, and testimony have been at the heart of many research works, but this is not the only reason why, in the first chapter of this book, we selected them as the basis of the argument in our discussion of the gift of free choice.

Despite various views regarding them, these texts hold the key to understanding the great blessing of freedom, which is simultaneously a great gift from Allah and one of man's hardest and most arduous trials. In discussing these trials, all the commentaries and explanations, whether traditional or rationalistic, invariably revolve around the pivotal question of human freedom.

A. *"Trust"*

All commentators believe that the word "trust," whether taken narrowly to mean religious obligations or broadly to mean general responsibility as an agent or representative of Allah, implies human freedom. This is because the real answerability of an agent for his obligations and duties or the metaphorical responsibility of mankind for all general Islamic injunctions, cannot be conceived without someone who has the freedom to accept or reject. Thus 'trust' implies the proper use of this freedom in responding to divine revelation and its injunctions. Therefore freedom is something that a person can either abuse by acting dishonestly or use properly by acting honestly, which determines whether or not a person is faithfully discharging his obligations. This explanation in no way conflicts with the various explanations by the learned commentators.

The truth of this view that "trust" implies freedom becomes still clearer when we consider that the word "obedience" has been chosen to explain the word "trust." The word "obedience" implies choice and refers only to mankind and to the lower order of spiritual beings, the jinn, who alone can be obedient. This is expressed in the statement in the Qur'an, "And man undertook it (33:72)."

The highest order of non-material beings, the angels, are so created that they cannot but obey, that is, they lack the power to disobey Allah. They know only by infusion, not by reason. Besides, the entire creation, the earth, the mountains and the sky, in fact everything is obedient to Allah, even though they refused to accept the trust offered to them by Allah.

Freedom is a necessary condition of obedience. Man must be free in order to choose to obey of his own free will or to refuse to do so. This represents an important aspect of the problem. If the trust is interpreted as obligations and duties, we are forthwith confronted with the need for freedom. We have already said that the responsibility for duties and obligations cannot be conceived in Islam in the absence of freedom to accept or reject them.

But if the trust is taken to mean obedience, why does the Qur'an describe man, who undertook it, as foolish and unjust?

Our purpose here is simply to elucidate the origin of the meaning of obedience, which is an integral part of the original Qur'anic concept of "trust." We neither reject nor dispute it, because the natural course of examining the nature of man's trust will lead us to the basic ingredients of freedom. That is why we hold that "freedom" is the

basic principle that determines man's relationship to his own God-given responsibilities.

B. *"Vicegerent"*

This view is still further elucidated when we look at the word "vicegerent" and the questions raised by the angels and the answer to these questions. The very nature of vicegerency demands that the vicegerent in practice should represent and act for the deputing authority. It would not be impertinent if we joined the scholars in asking how the angels knew that this vicegerent would cause corruption and bloodshed on earth. The answer to this question will fully explain the inter-relationship between human freedom and vicegerency on earth.

People have been confused about the angels' questions because the answer is so evident. Any being, however great, is bound to commit mistakes, big or small, if given freedom to act, because Allah alone is perfect. It is clear that the angels are the most honorable of all beings, created with a natural disposition to praise and worship Allah. In other words, they are the only creatures born with an instinct of obedience and are not capable of disobeying or sinning. Creatures with this nature and knowledge about the perfection of their Creator cannot fail to realize forthwith, and definitely, that any being other than Allah is incapable of absolute perfection, and that it therefore, if given freedom in determining its own course of action, will naturally tend to act in line with its innate disposition. Therefore the question about the angels having knowledge of the unseen does not arise, nor is there any basis for a controversy about this issue because their infused knowledge of Allah gave them knowledge of man. The moment they were told by their Lord that He was going to place a vicegerent on earth, i.e., a being who would enjoy a kind of freedom by virtue of his vicegerency, they could compare this created vicegerent both with all its inherent deficiencies and weaknesses and with the Creator Himself and all His perfection. This comparison inevitably gave them knowledge that these deficiencies and weaknesses in man would cause corruption and bloodshed on earth.

The issue raised by the angels concerned primarily the freedom that was to be given to this new creature by virtue of his vicegerency. They knew full well that this created freedom implied certain traits that were marked with certain deficiencies, imperfections, and hazards of its own. They were led to this conclusion by their knowledge that the

Creator and the created are essentially different, as are in fact also the created and everything eternal. The context also supports this analysis. The Divine words, "I know what you know not," in answer to the question of the angels, "Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood," in no way indicates that the angels were referring to the weakness inherent in man. The angels are infallible and they cannot disobey the Divine Will. Their question did not constitute an objection to an act of Allah, nor did they compete for a higher position with Adam. The negative aspect of freedom, which is a definite fact and essentially inherent in it, hid from them the positive aspects of this created freedom. They were not given the necessary knowledge about this by Allah. Their question was a straightforward and simple question without any other motive behind it. If the angels ask any question it must be to celebrate the praises of their Lord for that alone conforms to their noble disposition as created by Allah.

It was in this perspective that they asked their Lord, "Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood while we celebrate Your praises and glorify Your (holy name)?" and so received the answer, "I know what you know not." And when they came to know the truth, they exclaimed "Glory to You: of knowledge we have none, except what You have taught us: in truth it is You who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."

Then Allah praised his Ownself, which He fully deserves, saying: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and of earth, and I know what you reveal and what you conceal."

Whatever be the case, this dialogue between the angels and the Almighty was meant right in the beginning to highlight various aspects of man's goodness in front of both his friends and enemies. This explains why this dialogue concludes with Allah's command to the angels, "Bow down to Adam and they bowed down." This underlines the obedience of the angels to Allah and also their relationship with man.

Besides it also brings into sharp contrast the sinfully arrogant attitude of Satan toward Allah and toward Adam and his children: "...except Iblis (Satan): he refused and was haughty: he was of those who reject faith."

At one place (18:50) the Qur'an describes the friendly attitude of the angels toward man and exhorts man to treat Satan as an enemy and not as a friend. There are many other places in the Qur'an where

the friendliness of the angels to man is contrasted with the hostile attitude of Satan toward him. This was the beginning of Satan's efforts to beguile and misguide man.

"We said: O Adam! dwell with your wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) you will; but do not approach this tree, or you will run into harm and transgression. Then Satan made them slip from the (Garden) and got them out of the state of felicity in which they had been."[52]

This is followed by a long odyssey of nomadic generations of mankind, the Israelites, in the company of Satan, in which the Qur'an reminds and invites us to forge anew a friendly relationship with the angels warning us against harbouring any hostility toward them: "Say, 'Whosoever is an enemy to Gabriel' - for he brings down the revelation to thy heart by Allah's will, a confirmation of what went before, and guidance and glad tidings for those who believe, - whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and apostles, to Gabriel and Michael, (should know that) verily Allah is an enemy to all who deny the truth."[53]

It is up to man to choose his friends from among the angels or his enemies, Iblis (Satan) and his minions. It is primarily this freedom about which the angels wanted to know.

C. *"Testimony"*

Let us now consider the various interpretations given by different commentators about the Qur'anic verse "When your Lord drew forth the children of Adam ... (7:172)," and the above mentioned traditions of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

What is the meaning of man's testimony of knowledge in this verse? Does it mean that men are created with a pure (Islamic) nature or does it refer to a special covenant that was taken from them! No matter which of these two interpretations we take, we find that both are emphatic as far as the freedom of man is concerned.

If we take this testimony to mean that human beings are created with a pure nature of monotheism, the emphasis on human freedom is quite clear, because a vast majority of people do go against their innate disposition since they are free to do so and are not blocked by any angel or by Fate. This freedom extends to and can well nigh border on rebellion. That is why man is held responsible for his actions. From

[52] Qur'an 2:35-36
[53] Qur'an 2:97-98

this the full freedom of man is firmly established. He has the freedom to choose his course of action even if it is sometimes in total violation of Allah's Will, i.e., of the Islamic *shari'ah*.

If the testimony is taken to mean a covenant or a pledge, its emphasis is obviously on human freedom, for a pledge is taken only from one who has the power of fulfilling or violating it. There would be no sense in taking a pledge from someone who is unable to keep or break it. Thus testimony in the sense of taking a covenant is also sufficient to establish the concept of man's freedom.

In brief, the above texts deal with three issues, i.e., trust, vicegerency, and testimony, and they trace the concept of responsibility back to a period even before the emergence of man. Also they show that freedom is one of the basic ingredients of the Islamic concept of responsibility, which has a definite positive value in life.

Any curtailment of this conscious freedom, even though it might concern only the inner-self of man, is bound to cause a degeneration in his concept of responsibility, because in such a case it would necessarily lose some of its vital elements. One consequence of this would be the spread of hypocrisy as a common feature of social and political life, for the people would lose courage and no longer feel free to speak the truth. As the Qur'an says: "They come to prayer without earnestness and they offer contributions unwillingly."[54]

Thus Allah, our Lord and Creator, endowed man with all that was necessary for him as a free agent. First He gave him a free disposition and imposed on him the burden of vicegerency. Second, He saw to it that this freedom of man is safeguarded against all hostile external and internal onslaughts. And, third, He bestowed on man powers that help him safeguard his freedom and its lofty values and promote the development of personality over the whole span of this worldly life.

[54] Qur'an 9:54

Chapter Two

The Development of Potentialities and Capabilities: The Effect of Mind and Body on Obligations and Responsibilities

Allah, the Almighty, Who created man primarily for one of the greatest and most honorable of responsibilities, also equipped him with all the requisite potentialities and capabilities to enable him to fulfil the obligations laid on him by this burdensome trust. The foremost among these obligations, if not the most profound one, is the duty of preserving the ability to handle financial affairs properly, which, in the eyes of Islam is the nerve center of a society.

One of the greatest proofs of Allah's power is the strange form in which He has created man. "O man! what has seduced you from your Lord, the Most Beneficent, who has shaped your nature in due proportions and formed you in accordance with what you are meant to be, having put you together in whatever form He wills."[55]

If we look at the requisite conditions that render an act obligatory in terms of Islamic law (*fiqh*), we find a succinct summary of the potentialities and capabilities that accompany the burden of responsibility in Islam. The most prominent of these conditions that comprehend all the necessary capabilities for shouldering any responsibility are: adulthood, soundness of mind, and ability. We shall take these up, insha'Allah, from the standpoint of responsibility.

I. *The Prerequisites of Accountability in the Shari'ah*

A. *Adulthood*

Anyone considering the problem of fixing an age at which a person should be considered responsible for his deeds will immediately encounter disagreement among people on this point. This is why the age of legal responsibility differs from state to state. This difference is essentially the result of a difference of opinion on when a person attains the age of full maturity and becomes fully aware of the consequences of his or her deeds.

In contrast to these differences in systems of man-made law, we find in Islam a unique system marked by a sublimity and perfection in its

[55] Qur'an 82:6-8

legal formulations. Islam does give due regard to the chronological ages of young boys or girls past the age of childhood in certain subsidiary issues. The age of maturity at which a person is considered responsible in law or is held accountable, however, is determined by a rule that is unique and without any parallel in the history of law. This rule is perfect and precise, yet at the same time flexible. This rule, in brief, holds a person responsible when he attains to the age of puberty or is able to beget. The jurists, sometimes describe it as puberty and sometimes as "the age of obligation" or of "discretion." What concerns us here is the perfection inherent in this rule in terms of its precision, flexibility, and effectiveness in ministering to the needs of life in accordance with the principles of justice and compassion.

Its perfection is evident from the fact that Islam links mental development with physical growth, and defines the age of maturity in the sense of mental development as the age of legal responsibility.[56]

Pubescence or menstruation, in the case respectively of a boy or a girl, is the phase when physical maturity becomes clear. This physical maturity means the natural ability to raise a family through the power with which man is normally endowed. In other words a person becomes legally responsible as and when he attains the age of maturity. Thus the age of responsibility in Islam is the same as determined by nature and physical laws.

B. *Soundness of Mind*

Humanly speaking the excellence of this Islamic principle is all too evident, for we all know that only a sound body can have a sound mind. In other words, it is the physical maturity preceding the mental maturity of an individual that qualifies him for shouldering his responsibility in life and bearing the consequences of all his deeds from this particular stage onwards.

The flexibility of this rule is also evident for it is applied to different cases with discretion, and each case is judged separately on its merits. For example the age of maturity of a male varies from that of a female. This rule in its application therefore is flexible and takes account of the variation in the ages of maturity of the two sexes. Islamic jurisprudence is responsive to this variation, so that its rules on the onset of responsibility avoid the defects found in other legal systems,

[56]The importance of financial obligations and of one's accountability regarding them led the majority of the jurists to hold the guardian of a child responsible for meeting all the obligations arising out of the property of his charge.

which insist on one uniform age for all despite variations in their ages of maturity.

This flexibility does not lessen the firmness and precision of this rule, for pubescence is accompanied by manifest physical signs, beginning with a change of voice, the appearance of a cleft on the tip of the nose, growth of hair, marriageability, and menstruation. The jurists have discussed the issue at length in the context both of sane minors and insane adults.

The basic principle that emerges from this discussion is that Islam gives due regard to the natural endowments with which each and every individual is equipped. A man cannot be held accountable in the absence of evidence that he is conscious of his responsibility, and no argument is more convincing or effective than the tangible fact that one can feel and experience oneself.

The excellence of the *shari'ah* is best manifested here in the fact that responsibility is imposed on a person at a time in his life when he is highly motivated by a desire for self-realization to the extent that he strongly resents any orders given to him by his elders. At this stage he feels that he is now sufficiently grown-up and is one of them. Therefore it is quite natural that at this stage this feeling in him should be channeled in the proper direction and that he should be given the burden of responsibility and the opportunity by gladly shouldering it to gain a sense of self-realization.

The equity, justice, and sensitivity inherent in this rule may be seen from two different angles. First, the justice of this rule is evident in the fact that mental and physical maturity may precede any age fixed by law, in which case any deferment of accountability may constitute negligent failure to apply the principles of equity and justice.

The sensitivity of this rule is particularly evident in cases where the actual mental and physical maturity of an individual may not be reached until after any set chronological age laid down by law. The Islamic rule of determining the age of legal responsibility is a blessing for all those cases where the persons concerned are not mentally and physically ready to bear responsibility.

These circumstances show the excellence of the Islamic rule in its perfection, flexibility of application, firmness of principles, practicability, justice, and kindness.

C. *Capability*

The requirement or condition of capability, in addition to maturity

and sanity, completes the picture, affirms the flexibility of the general rule, and firmly establishes it as just and kind. Before a person is called to account we must make sure that he or she was in a position to act.

A capability to bear the burden is a necessary condition for the imposition of an obligation on any person, for "Allah does not burden a soul with more than it can bear."[57]

This capability can be of various kinds. It may relate to health, security, wealth, knowledge, or position. It may also carry some other connotations according to the nature of the responsibility imposed.

For instance, in the case of the individual obligation to perform the Hajj, puberty and soundness of mind are not enough, for a Muslim must also have the capability to go, which in this case means that he must be healthy, financially well-off, and sufficiently secure to undertake the journey.

In the case of collective obligations, it is the duty of society to provide for the needs of Muslims in different fields. To achieve this, society may assign certain duties to those who are well qualified and able to perform them in their respective fields.

The general administration of religious and worldly affairs is a collective duty of the society, but such governance should be performed only by persons capable of shouldering this burden. The particular indicia of capability in this case would include administrative ability, knowledge, fear of Allah, and concern for justice.

In short, we can say that the principle of legal responsibility in Islam encompasses three main conditions: puberty, sanity, and capability.

II. *The Comprehensiveness of Legal Provisions*

This perfection can be noted in specific legal provisions, where we find that the imposition of obligation at the time of puberty is intimately connected with sanity and full capability. The general evidence regarding various obligations also supports this conclusion.

As an example of this, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal relates on the authority of 'Aisha that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Three persons are absolved of responsibility: a sleeping man until he awakes, a child until he attains adulthood, and a madman until he regains his senses." In another version also related from her, the words of the hadith are: "Three people are free of any obligation: a sleeping man

[57] Qur'an 2:286

until he is awake, an afflicted person until he is cured, and a child until he is able to understand."

In the following two verses the functions of intellect and sight are described as almost co-extensive, for the eyes are the sensory and organic means that provide the human intellect with all the raw material needed to acquire information and formulate its knowledge. Allah says: "Do they see nothing in the dominion of the heavens and the earth and all that Allah has created."[58] In another place He asks: "Do they not look at the camels, how they are made? and at the sky, how it is raised high? and at the mountains, how they are firmly fixed? and at the earth, how it is spread out? Therefore do give admonition, for you are one to admonish."[59]

In fact the word seeing is used synonymously with thinking, a faculty that even a person without sight might well possess. Allah says: "Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts."[60]

This is why the Qur'an uses hearing and thinking together as in this verse: "They will further say: Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we should not (now) be among the companions of the Blazing Fire."[61]

The same is true about the *shari'ah* view of reason and its close relationship with organic and physical maturity. The *shari'ah* includes maturity of mind in the definition of capability, and as an indication of such capability.

The ears, eyes, tongue, lips, and organs like the hands, feet and senses attain their full maturity when a person reaches the age of puberty. But man is not alone in this. Animals have similar organs and senses with a greater variety and intensity of strength.

We note that when they are mentioned in the Qur'an or the *Sunnah* they are mentioned as complementary to moral and intellectual faculties and potentialities. In other words the real objective is far higher than the mere use of the senses. This explains why man needs revealed guidance and is reduced to the level of animals if he neglects the higher moral objectives for which his senses were created. Let us consider some of the Qur'anic verses dealing with the human senses.

[58] Qur'an 7:185
[59] Qur'an 88:17-21
[60] Qur'an 22:46
[61] Qur'an 67:10

About the heart, eyes, and ears:

> They have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle, nay more misguided; for they are heedless of warning.[62]

Ibn Kathir, explaining this verse, says that they do not benefit from these organs which Allah has granted them to enable them to follow guidance, for they are no better than animals who use all their faculties just for feeding themselves.

> .... Every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).[63]
>
> .... He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections; that you may give thanks.[64]
>
> .... And we had endowed them with (faculties of) hearing, seeing, heart and intellect; but of no profit to them were their (faculties of) hearing, sight and heart and intellect, when they went on rejecting the signs of Allah.[65]

About walking and speaking Allah says:

> ... And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice[66]
>
> ....Not a word does (man) utter but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to record it).[67]

And at another place:

> ...Nor walk on the earth with insolence; for you can not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height![68]

About the tongue and the lips, Allah says:

> ....Have we not made for him a pair of eyes and a tongue and a pair of lips? and shown him the two ways (good and evil)?[69]

III. *Building a Responsible Personality Before Adulthood.*

Islam prepares man mentally and morally before it actually applies

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[62] Qur'an 7:171
[63] Qur'an 17:36
[64] Qur'an 16:78
[65] Qur'an 46:26
[66] Qur'an 31:18
[67] Qur'an 50:18
[68] Qur'an 17:37
[69] Qur'an 90:8-10

to him legal provisions, just as man prepares and ploughs land before he plants any crops in it. For example, the Islamic etiquette about seeking permission, as described in the Qur'an (24:58-59), prescribes the manners that a child ought to observe after reaching the age of puberty. Parents are told to teach these manners to their children, and how to apply them. After attaining puberty, their children are treated as men and women with specific obligations of etiquette.

Allah says:

> O you who believe! Let those whom your right hands possess and the (children) among you who have not come of age ask your permission (before they come to your presence), on three occasions: before morning prayers; while you lay aside your clothes for the noonday heat, and after the late night prayers. These are your three times of undress: outside those times it is not wrong for you or for them to move about attending to each other. Thus does Allah make clear the signs to you, for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom? [70]

Further on we are told: "But when the children among you come of age, let them (also) ask for permission, as do those senior to them (in age). Thus does Allah make clear His signs to you; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom." [71]

Auza'i relates from Yahya ibn Abi Kathir that boys must ask for the permission of their parents at these three times of privacy, but when they are grown up they must do so at all times.

Similarly Syed ibn Jubair relates from Ibn Kathir, in the commentary on Surah al-Nur that the words of Allah "as do those senior to them" mean that a boy when grown up must seek permission like the elder sons of his parents and other relatives or the people who have been earlier mentioned in the general context of seeking permission in the same surah."

As to the training of children early in their lives to prepare them for their future responsibilities, we have some ahadith directing us to admonish them for prayers when they are seven years old, and to punish them for not doing so when they are ten. Let us now move on and see what the attitude of the *sunnah* is toward this comprehensive concept of responsibility. We give below some of the ahadith that underline this comprehensiveness.

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[70] Qur'an 24:58
[71] Qur'an 24:59

The tongue, hands, and private parts are the most sensitive organs of the human anatomy, and they call for restraint and responsibility. Bukhari reports the holy Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "Whoever can guarantee (the chastity of) what is between his two jaw-bones and what is between his two legs (i.e., his tongue and his private parts), I guarantee Paradise for him."[72]

Similarly, Bukhari relates from Abdullah ibn 'Umar that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "A true Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe, and a true emigrant is he who leaves that which Allah has forbidden."[73] Bukhari also narrates on the authority of Abu Musa that the Prophet was asked: "Who is the best in Islam?" He answered: "He from whose tongue and hands other Muslims feel safe."[74]

IV. A Model of Social Development

Before considering other organs in general, let us briefly look into the responsibility of a person for his speech, as outlined in the *sunnah*, for this teaching of the *shariah* represents a unique and perfect example of how the responsibility for a single organ is determined and discharged as a part of the wider human responsibility. The fulfillment of this specific responsibility leads to positive social development, strengthens human relations, creates confidence, and contributes to stability in life.

With regards to the responsibility for one's tongue, Bukhari relates on the authority of Umm Salma that the Prophet, peace be upon him, heard the sound of some people quarrelling outside the door of his room. He came out and said to them: "I am only a human being, and litigants bring their disputes to me, and some of you may be more eloquent than the others, whereby I may consider them truthful and pass a judgement in their favor. Even if I pass a judgement in favor of somebody whereby he takes a Muslim's right unjustly, then whatever he takes is nothing but a piece of fire and it is up to him to take it or leave it.[75]

This responsibility for one's utterances develops the faculty of self-assessment and an awareness of Allah, which, in turn, is reflected in a person's whole attitude and behavior.

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[72] Bukhari: Kitab Al-Riqaq
[73] Bukhari: Kitab Al-Iman
[74] Bukhari and Muslim
[75] Bukhari and Muslim

One element of this responsibility is the duty to keep silent and not speak unnecessarily. Bukhari relates on the authority of Ibn 'Umar that he said: "I went to Hafsa i.e., his sister and the wife of the holy Prophet, peace be upon him. She was washing her hair and her head was still wet. I said: 'The people have decided as you see, and I had no say in the matter.' (He meant the incident of arbitration at Siffin). She answered: 'Go and join them. They are waiting for you, lest you be isolated from them and become a separate sect.' She insisted until he went away. When the people were scattered, Muawiyya delivered a speech and said: 'Whoever wants to say anything in this matter let him come forward, for we are more deserving to hear it from him!' Habib ibn Mussalama said: 'Did you not respond to him?' Abdullah ibn 'Umar said: 'I stood and wanted to say: "He who in the cause of Islam fought you and your father is more deserving of this (caliphate) than you." But I was afraid lest my words might cause dissension among Muslims and lead to bloodshed and for all this I might be held accountable (before Allah), and be deprived of the reward that Allah has prepared in Paradise (for His servants).' Habib said: 'You were guarded and saved.'"[76]

This tradition shows the sense of responsibility to keep silent and not say what is right for fear of causing discord, whereas the previous one teaches us to save our tongues from pleading for an unjust and false claim in a judicial court. The objective behind both of these ahadith, however, is one and the same, and that is seeking the pleasure of Allah. In both cases we achieve peace and tranquility in our individual lives as well as in the social life of the community.

The need for responsible speech is all the more important in matters concerning one's creed or marital relations.

Bukhari relates on the authority of Thabit ibn Dhahhak, who was one of those who took the famous oath of allegiance under the Tree, that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Whoever swears by a religion other than Islam in case he is telling a lie, is really making a false oath; and a person is not bound to fulfill a vow about something which he does not possess; and if somebody uses a particular instrument to commit suicide, he will be punished with that very thing on the Day of Resurrection; and if somebody curses a believer then his sin will be as if he had murdered him; and whoever accuses a believer of *kufr* (deliberate disbelief), then it is as if he had killed him."[77]

[76] Bukhari: Kitab Al-Maghazi
[77] Bukhari: Kitab al Adab

A number of basic manners and primary obligations in Islam stem from this very principle of refraining from injuring the feelings of others. Restraining one's tongue from telling lies is one of the most important obligations that Islam imposes on a Muslim. Bukhari quotes Abdul Rahman ibn 'Ali Bakara who relates on the authority of his father that, "the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Among the major sins are: to join others in worship with Allah, to be undutiful to one's parents, and to give false witness.' He repeated it thrice, or said.... 'a false statement,' and kept on repeating that warning until we wished he would stop saying it."[78]

Keeping one's tongue from slander and detraction, that is, from inventing faults about a person or simply telling the truth about another's faults, is equally important. These two are the major public sins, and undermine the whole society. Bukhari relates from Human who reports Hudhaifa as saying: "I heard the Prophet saying that a detractor (one who carries true tales with an evil intention of poisoning relations) will not enter Paradise."[79]

Abu Ya'la quotes Al-Bara as saying: "The Prophet addressed us and raised his voice until the old and infirm ladies in their houses could hear him. He said 'O Ye who declare faith with mouths but it has yet not entered your hearts, do not speak ill of the Muslims behind their backs, nor spy on them, for whoever spies on his Muslim brother, Allah shall spy on him, and he on whom Allah spies shall be disgraced in the midst of his own house."[80]

Anas ibn Malik says: "The Arabs were wont to employ some people to serve them on their journeys. (During one such journey) Abu Bakr and 'Umar had a servant with them. When they awoke after a sleep they found that he had not prepared food for them. At this they said: 'He is a sluggard.' Then they woke him up and told him to go to the holy Prophet and say to him: 'Abu Bakr and 'Umar send their greetings to you and seek your permission to come and visit you.' The holy Prophet said: 'You have already feasted.' They both said: 'O Messenger of Allah! On what have we feasted ourselves.' He replied: 'Upon the flesh of your brother, and by Him in whose hands is my soul, I can see it, in your bodies.' They said: 'Pray for our

[78] Bukhari: The Book of Apostates
[79] Bukhari and Muslim
[80] Al-Baihaqi: Al-Kanz, v.8, P.200

forgiveness, O Messenger of Allah!' Thereupon the holy Prophet told them: 'I shall pray for your forgiveness.'''[81]

This same sense of responsibility teaches a man to hold his tongue and refrain from issuing verdicts without any clear knowledge.

Bukhari relates from Urwah that, ''He reported from Abdullah ibn 'Umar that he heard the holy Prophet saying: 'Allah does not all of a sudden take away knowledge from people, but He takes it away by taking away the learned from among them with the result that only the ignorant are left behind, whose verdicts are followed by people. Thus they go astray themselves and misguide others.' I related this to 'Aisha, the wife of the holy Prophet, peace be upon him. When Abdullah ibn 'Umar came for Hajj she said to me: 'O My sister's son! Go to Abdullah and verify from him the truth of what you have told me.' So I went to see him and asked him about it. He related it to me as he had done before. Then I returned to 'Aisha and told her. She was surprised and said: 'By Allah, Abdullah ibn 'Umar has remembered it well.'''[82]

Responsibilities of the tongue also include refraining from whispering if it is likely to injure the feelings of others. Bukhari relates on the authority of Abdullah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: ''No two persons should whisper between themselves if there are three of them.''[83]

This responsibility also includes refraining from harmful praise. Bukhari relates from Abu Musa who said: ''The holy Prophet heard a man praising another man, and he was exaggerating in his praise. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'You have destroyed (or cut) the back of the man.'''[84] Bukhari also relates from Abu Bakara that, ''A man was mentioned before the Prophet, peace be upon him, and another praised him greatly. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'May Allah's mercy be on you! You have cut the neck of your friend,' and he repeated this sentence many times and said: 'If it is indispensable for anyone of you to praise someone, then he should say: 'I think that he is so and so, if he really thinks that he is such. Allah is the One who will take his account, nor can one sanctify anybody before Allah.'''[85]

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[81] Al-Hafiz Al-Dhiya, *Al-Mukhtar.*
[82] Bukhari and Muslim
[83] Bukhari and Muslim
[84] Bukhari, Kitab al Adab
[85] Bukhari, Kitab al Adab

Refraining from raising questions about the matters in which the *shari'ah* is silent also expresses the same sense of responsibility. Bukhari relates from Anas ibn Malik who reported the holy Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "If you knew that which I know, you would laugh little and weep much." The companions of the holy Prophet, peace be upon him, covered their faces (and were eager to know more about it). Then a person said: "Who is my father?" The holy Prophet, peace be upon him, replied: "So and so is your father." Thereupon this verse was revealed: "O ye who believe! Ask not questions about things which, if made plain to you, may cause you trouble." [86] Ibn Kathir records a sound hadith in which the holy Prophet is reported to have said: "Do not indulge in things which I left unmentioned, for the people before you were destroyed by their habit of asking too many questions, and by their differences about their Prophets."[87]

Another sound hadith reads: "Verily, Allah has imposed certain duties on you: never neglect them. He has also laid down certain limits: never transgress them; He has prohibited certain things, so never commit them: and He has kept silent about certain things, out of mercy for you and not because of forgetfulness, so do not ask questions about them."

Busy people engaged in serious work do not have time for such bickering or useless and irrelevant things.

Another responsibility of a man for his tongue is to keep it from abusing others. A *sahih* tradition reports the holy Prophet as saying: "Abusing a Muslim is a sin and killing him is an act of disbelief (*Kufr*)."

All these responsibilities underline the need for keeping one's tongue under control and refraining from any sinful speech. There are certain other responsibilities, however, that make it almost essential that a man speak out and not remain silent. The foremost among these is the responsibility of conveying the message of Islam to others.

Imam Ahmad relates from Zaid ibn Thabit that he said: "I heard the holy Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying: "May Allah bless the man who hears something from us and commits it to his memory and then conveys it to others, for many bearers of a message may not be as wise

[86] Qur'an 5:104
[87] Tafsir Ibn Kathir

as those to whom they convey it. The receivers might know better than those through whom they receive the knowledge."

Imam Bukhari relates from Abu Bakara who said: "The holy Prophet, peace be upon him, addressed us on the day of sacrifice (*yaum al-nahr*), and asked: 'Do you know what day it is today?' We said: ' Allah and His Messenger know best.' He remained silent until we thought he might give it some other name. Then he said: 'Is it not the day of sacrifice?' We said: ' Yes, it is.' He said: 'What month is this?' We said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He remained silent until we thought he might give it some other name. Then he said: 'Is it not the month of Dhul Hijj?' We said: 'Yes, it is.' He said: 'What city is this?' We said: 'Allah and His Messenger know best.' He remained silent until we thought he might give it some other name.' Then he said: 'Is it not the (sacred) city?' We said: 'Yes, it is.' Thereupon he said: 'Your blood and property are sacrosanct to each other like the sanctity of this day, this month and this city of yours until the day you shall confront your Lord. Lo! Have I conveyed the message to you?' They said: 'Yes, you have.' He said: 'O Allah! bear witness (to what they are saying). Let those who are present convey the message to those who are absent, for many a person who receives it indirectly is more conscious than the one who hears it directly from the source. Don't revert to disbelief after me by killing each other.'"

Imam Shaukani says: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, uttered the words 'O Allah! bear witness' because it was a duty imposed on him by Allah to convey the message, and he asked Him to testify that he had done his duty."

Al-Mahlab says: "In the later centuries there will be people who shall have intelligence and knowledge beyond what their predecessors possessed, but such people will be small in number for the word '*rubba*' used in hadith indicates only a small number."[88]

Another responsibility that falls under this category is the obligation of being true and sincere to others, which relates to the proper use of one's tongue as much as other organs: "Ibn Asakir relates on the authority of Abu Darda, 'There is no Islam without obedience and there is no good but in remaining within the community. And sincerity is for Allah, for the rulers of Muslims and for Muslims in general.'"[89]

[88] *Nail Al Awtar*, v.3, 350-351.
[89] *Al-Kanz*, v.8, 227.

One of the positive responsibilities imposed on a Muslim respecting his speech is that he must enjoin good and forbid evil.

Imam Muslim relates on the authority of Abu Sa'id Khudri that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Whoever among you sees an evil let him change it with his hand, and if he is not able to do that then let him change it with his tongue, and in case he is unable to do even that then with his heart, but this is the lowest degree of faith."[90]

Imam Ahmad relates on the authority of Abu Huzaifa ibn Al-Yaman that the Prophet said: "By the One in whose hands is my life, you must enjoin good and forbid evil; otherwise you shall soon be overtaken by the wrath of Allah: then you will call upon Him but your prayers will not be answered. This includes good speech and spreading the salutations of peace."

Bukhari relates from Adi ibn Hatim that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Save yourselves from Hellfire, even if it be by giving half a date fruit in charity. And if you do not find a half a date fruit, then (you can do it through saying) a pleasant word (to your brethren)."[91]

The similar treatment meted out to the enemies of the Islamic faith and to idolaters in war is also based on the same principle. Bukhari relates from Bara that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to Hassan (the poet): "Lampoon them (the pagans) and (the angel) Gabriel is with you."[92]

In this regard there are certain other obligations as well, some of which require a person to hold his tongue and not utter any thing improper, while other obligations demand that he be bold and speak out on what is right and proper. A detailed description of all of these would be too long. What has been said above is sufficient to show the comprehensiveness of the guidelines provided in the *sunnah* for the proper use of the tongue. The use of other human organs and the responsibilities that go with them are similarly treated in great detail, because their collective impact, if employed properly, is very important in the development both of the individual and of the community.

Let us conclude this section with a hadith that covers all the organs and limbs of the human body. Abu Hurairah relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "From every single joint of a man a charity is due every day; thus when a person treats others with indiscriminate

[90] Muslim
[91] Bukhari
[92] Bukhari & Muslim

justice it is considered a charity from him; similarly if someone helps another person to mount his animal or helps him load it with goods it will be a charity for him. And a good word is a charity, and every step that a Muslim takes while going (to the mosque) for prayers is a charity, and removing the harmful things from the road is also a charity."[93]

This tradition leaves out no aspect of community development, and calls upon man to contribute toward this development by every possible means through obedience to Allah and His Messenger.

V. THE SIGNS OF PUBERTY AS THE AGE OF LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

Let us now consider puberty and its clear signs as found in the hadith. Bukhari relates on the authority of Umm Salma that she said: "Um Sulaim came to the holy Prophet, peace be upon him, and said: 'O Allah's Messenger! Verily Allah disdains not to mention the truth. Is it compulsory for a woman to take a ritual bath if she has a seminal discharge? The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: '(Yes), if she finds water.' Um Salma covered her face, and said: 'O Allah's Messenger! And does a woman too have a seminal discharge? He said: 'Of course, yes. For how otherwise could her child resemble her?'"[94]

Abu Dawood relates from Khalid ibn Duraik on the authority of 'Aisha that Asma bint Abu Bakr came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, wearing transparently thin clothes. The Prophet, peace be upon him, turned away from her and said: "O Asma! When a woman has attained puberty, no part of her body should be visible except this and this." He pointed to his face and the two palms. Abu Dawood says that this tradition is *mursal*,[95] as Khalid ibn Duraik did not hear it from 'Aisha directly.

Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Taking a ritual bath on Friday is obligatory on every adult."

Bukhari relates that 'Ali said to 'Umar: "Don't you know that there is no responsibility on a mad man until he recovers, and on a child until he attains puberty, and on a sleeping person until he wakes up?"[96]

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[93] Bukhari

[94] Bukhari

[95] A tradition resting on a chain of authorities that goes no further back than the second generation after the Prophet.

[96] Bukhari, *Maharibin*.

A cursory glance over the traditions given above shows that they are in total conformity with the Qur'an on the human responsibility involving various senses and physical organs after the age of puberty. This conformity is manifest in the way these responsibilities are distributed among the various senses and organs by both the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. Furthermore both the Qur'an and the *sunnah* reveal perfect coordination and harmony between the obligations imposed on the human body and on human reason.

We have already seen this harmony between the physical potentialities or organs and their higher moral objectives, especially in the responsibilities for one's tongue as outlined above, both in silence and in speech.

The traditions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, have dealt with all the senses in a most convincing and effective manner. They give the wisdom behind various commandments and provide a true account of history so that we can benefit from the experience of previous peoples, and they also exhort us to do good and warn against evil, as is clear to anybody who reads these traditions.

Similarly the legal role of the *sunnah* as the decisive authority in determining one's obligations is clearly manifest in the legal provisions concerning puberty, as laid down by the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself. These legal provisions are as practical and beneficial as those laid down in the Qur'an and are in perfect conformity with the principles of justice and equity. They are also flexible and specific, yet universal and comprehensive.

We need hardly add that the textual evidence mentioned above from the Qur'an and the *sunnah* has a direct bearing on a person's physical and material potentialities and possibilities, which in the language of the *shari'ah* are collectively termed *bulugh* (maturity or legal majority) or *idrak* (age of understanding or discretion). That is why the jurists classify and discuss man's mental and physical powers (as conditions of maturity) under the two separate headings of *'aql* or reason and *bulugh* or physical maturity, which we have dealt with above in the light of the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. All of what has been said above, however, regarding the intellectual goals and legal responsibilities and their purpose and subordination to the essential condition of being able to bear them, is meant to show the *cohesion*, *harmony*, and *perfection* of the rules governing and defining responsibility laid down by the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. These are the three qualities this study seeks to explain and elucidate.

Now all that remains for us is to show how the responsibilities of a person correspond to his mental and physical powers. This we propose to do in the light of the general and comprehensive principles that co-ordinate those powers and are stated in the Qur'an and the *sunnah*.

VI. Mental and Physical Capability for Responsibility

Responsibility is always commensurate with a person's mental and physical powers. This is why no responsibility whatever rests on an insane person who suffers from a total loss of his reason. If this condition is only temporary, caused by certain temporary obstacles that prevent the mind from discharging its function, the suspension of responsibility will also be only temporary. Insanity denotes the relatively permanent loss of reason, whereas sleep, forgetfulness, and unconsciousness are examples of a temporary loss. For this reason, Muslim jurists hold sanity to be a necessary prerequisite for any obligation or duty.

This rule underlines the dependence of responsibility on a person's mental equipment. Since the mind plays a leading role in planning the acts and movements of body, we have selected it to demonstrate the perfection of this rule in different situations. In some the mental and physical powers are interlikned or fused together, while in other situations they remain isolated and separate from each other, though their cohesion and harmony with the actual capability of a man is quite obvious.

Sleep and unconsciousness, for instance, suspend both physical and mental faculties simultaneously and render man incapable of doing or achieving anything.

On the other hand, forgetfulness causes suspension only of that part of the mind's functions related to things that are forgotten. All the rest of the physical functions remain unaffected. The forgotten things drop out of focus and disappear from the sphere of intentional behavior, thereby reducing for the time being the actual ability of a person.

In the case of compulsion, the mental faculties remain fully active while a person is physically forced to do or abandon certain things in accordance with the wishes of whoever exerts the compulsion. In such a case, the freedom of action of the person is suspended and he is no longer in a position to act or behave as a free agent.

Still another case is the state of sickness, which affects and suspends the physical powers of a man while his mental powers remain fully

intact. In such a case, a person would be regarded as incapable or incompetent.

Still other emergency situations may affect physical and psychic powers, such as travel and weather. The Islamic *shari'ah* takes account of all such situations and makes due allowance for them by granting concessions for some obligations and duties.

In all the above situations we have treated the capability factor as the overriding condition for four reasons:

First, the main arguments in the Qur'an and the *sunnah* are generally applicable to all these situations;

Second, to highlight the perfection of the rule according to which the responsibilities of a person must be commensurate with his capabilities;

Third, the last three situations (compulsion, sickness, and emergencies) are likely to affect almost all the physical and mental powers of man and therefore underline the gravity of the situation. As such the presence of such a flexible rule to deal with them shows the perfect harmony between nature and Islamic psychological and social teachings.

Fourth, everything is subject to the requirement of capability for similar reasons, because the capability of a person is comprised of his various powers, mental as well as physical.

The specific applications of this relationship between responsibility and capability are numerous in both the Qur'an and hadith. Allah says: "On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear" (Qur'an 2:286).

Muhammad ibn Munkadr relates that he heard Umaimah bint Raqaiqa saying: "I took an oath of allegiance to the Prophet, peace be upon him, along with some other women. He said '(Only) in matters in which you are capable and able (to obey).' I said: 'Allah and His Prophet are more compassionate to us than we are to ourselves.' Then I said: 'Take the oath of allegiance from us, O Prophet of Allah! (Sufiyan says that she meant shaking hands). Thereupon the Prophet said: 'My word to a hundred women is as my word to one of them.'"[97]

With regard to a mad man, Bukhari relates that 'Ali ibn Abi Talib said: "All kinds of divorce are permissible except that of a mad man."[98]

The fact that any evils committed by mistake, forgetfulness, or compulsion are forgiven has been dealt with by Ibn Majah (in his *Sunnan*) and Ibn Haban (in his *Sahih*). Both of them quote a hadith

[97] *Tuhfatul Ahwzi*, v.5, 220; see also Nasa'i. Tirmidhi considers it a sound hadith.
[98] Bukhari: Chapter on Divorce

on the authority of Ibn Abbas that says: "Allah has forgiven my community for what they might do due to a mistake, forgetfulness, or coercion." Ibn 'Ali Hatim also relates from Um Darda according to which the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Allah has forgiven my Ummah three things: mistakes, forgetfulness, and anything done under compulsion." Abu Bakr al-Hodhali says that when he narrated this to Hasan, he said, "Don't you recite in the Qur'an: 'O Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error.'"[99]

Abu Hurairah relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If somebody eats or drinks forgetfully then he should complete his fast, for what he has eaten or drunk has been given to him by Allah."[100] Abu Hurairah also relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If somebody eats or drinks forgetfully it does not affect his fast, for what he has eaten or drunk is a sustenance given to him by Allah."[101]

The divorce given by a man under compulsion is, for the same reason, invalid. Bukhari has devoted a separate chapter to this and says that if under compulsion somebody says about his wife "she is my sister" there is no blame on him. He further elucidates this point in the next chapter, which deals specifically with a divorce given in a state of anger, under compulsion or under the effects of intoxicants or insanity, and more generally with ascribing partners to Allah and doing things by mistake or through forgetfulness, etc.

Bukhari refers to the hadith which says that deeds are evaluated according to one's intentions and that everybody will receive the reward of what he had intended. He cites the Qur'anic verse, "Our Lord! Do not punish us if we forget or fall into error" (2:286). He also refers to the invalidity of the confession of a person who is in a state of mental confusion. The Prophet, peace be upon him, exclaimed to a man who confessed against himself, "Are you mad?"

'Ali says: "Hamza cut open the flanks of my two she-camels. The Prophet, peace be upon him, admonished Hamza, but Hamza was heavily drunk and his eyes were red. Hamza then said: 'Are not all of you but the slaves of my father?' Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, realized that Hamza was not in his right senses, so he left and we too left with him."[102]

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[99] Ibn Kathir, v.1, 342-343.
[100] Bukhari & Muslim
[101] Bukhari
[102] This incident relates to the days before drinking was prohibited.

'Uthman said, "A divorce given by an insane man or a drunk is not valid." Ibn Abbas said: "A divorce contemplated and carried out by a man because of the whisperings of his heart is not valid."

A person shall not be called to account for all that passes through his mind in a state of mental confusion or hesitation, as is supported by a hadith related by Bukhari from Abu Hurairah, according to which he heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say: "Allah has forgiven my followers the evil thought that might occur to their minds, as long as such a thought is not put into action or uttered." Qatada said: "If someone divorces his wife just in his mind, such an unuttered divorce has no effect." The same all-inclusive principle is manifest in the observations of the Companions and the jurists regarding the circumstances of travel or sickness that necessitate ease and concession in the discharge of certain religious obligations.

Allah says: "But if any one is ill, or is on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up by a certain number of) days later."[103] This means that if one is sick during Ramadan and one's sickness makes fasting difficult or aggravates one's sickness, or if one is traveling, one need not fast. In such a case one has to fast later to make up for the missed days. Says Allah: "Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties."[104] In other words, out of mercy and kindness Allah has granted this concession to you when you are sick or on a journey, while prescribing them for those who are healthy or not traveling. There are certain questions that arise about this verse.

1) A group of scholars hold the opinion that if one is not traveling at the beginning of the month but then travels, it is not permissible for him to miss any fast on the excuse of traveling. They deduce this from the verse: "So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting." On the other hand, a person who is on a journey at the beginning of the month may break his fast. This is a solitary tradition and is related by Abu Muhammad ibn Haz from some companions and the successors (*tabi'in).* This view is disputable because it is proven by sound ahadith that the Prophet left Medina for the battle of al-Fath and when he reached Kadid he broke his fast and also asked other people to do so.[105]

2) Some of the companions and their successors (*tabi'in*) hold that

[103] Qur'an 2:185
[104] Qur'an 2:185
[105] Bukhari and Muslim

it is incumbent upon a person to break his fast during a journey. In support of their view they cite the verse: "The prescribed period (should be made up) by (an equal number of) days later."

The correct view, however, generally accepted by the majority of the scholars, says that to fast or not to fast during a journey is optional and neither keeping nor breaking it is obligatory. The companions tell us that they used to travel with the Prophet during the month of Ramadan. "There were some of us who fasted (during these journeys) while others did not, but neither those who fasted blamed those who did not fast, nor did those who did not fast reproach those who did. If breaking the fast were compulsory, the Prophet surely would have forbidden them to fast during a journey, but he did not to so. Rather, Abu Darda tells us, "We travelled in the company of the holy Prophet. It was extremely hot, and the heat was so intense that the people covered their heads with their hands. None amongst us was fasting except the Prophet and Abdullah ibn Rawaha."

3) Some other people, including Imam Shafi'i, are of the opinion that fasting during a trip is preferable, because as mentioned above the Prophet did so.

Others say that breaking the fast during a journey is preferable, for the Prophet when asked once about fasting during a journey, replied: "He who broke his fast did well but he who fasted is not to be blamed."

In another hadith he said: "You ought to avail yourselves of the concession that Allah has granted you."

Another group of scholars is of the view that both opinions are equal and that the opinion of neither group has any preference over the other. They base their stand on a hadith from 'Aisha which says that Hamza ibn Amr al-Aslam went to the Prophet, and said: "O Prophet of Allah, I fast continuously. Shall I fast during travel too." The holy Prophet, said: "You may fast if you wish, and you may not fast if you wish."[106]

The principle here is that if fasting is hard, it is better to break it according to the hadith that the Prophet saw a man being shaded (by people). He asked: "What is the matter?" The people said: "He is fasting." Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "It is not righteousness for you to fast on a journey."

Whoever does not follow this *sunnah*, because he thinks that

[106] Bukhari and Muslim

breaking the fast is disapproved, must break the fast. Such a person is forbidden to fast, as related in a tradition transmitted by *Musnad* of Ahmad and others on the authority of Ibn 'Umar and Jabir that, "Whosoever does not take advantage of the facility granted to him by Allah, commits a sin as big as the Mount of Arafa."

4) On the question whether one should fast consecutively or in intervals to make up for the missed days of fasting, there are two views. One view is that consecutive fasting is imperative because it is similar to the prescribed fasting. The other view is that it is not obligatory and one is free to fast either consecutively or with breaks in between. This latter view is held by the majority of the jurists, because continuity is essential in Ramadan only. Therefore after the month of Ramadan the main aim is to make up the number of days. The Qur'an says: "The prescribed period (should be made up) by (other) days later."[107]

It is clear from the above examples that the injuctions of the *shari'ah* cover almost all the situations where man may be either capable or incapable of fulfilling his obligations. Thus in some cases fasting may be desirable, but in other cases not so and breaking the fast may be better. These injunctions of the *shari'ah* cover different situations of life, keeping in view the differences that exist among people in their powers and capabilities. In short, we can say that puberty, sanity, and capability are the most basic prerequisites in determining responsibility, as is evident from the Qur'an and hadith and the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his Companions. Here is a comprehensive program of development that covers all spheres of life. It takes account of the existing potential of persons and communities and of the tremendous, even miraculous, increase in their powers and capabilities after they accept Divine Guidance. In other words, no matter how ambitious a development program may be, it is always within the reach of a Muslim provided he abides by and faithfully follows the superb plan of Islam.

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[107] *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, v. 1, 216-217.

PART THREE

ISLAM AND THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN EFFORT

Chapter One:

The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* on the Importance of Human Effort in Choosing Conduct

I. Teachings of the Qur'an

II. Teachings of the *Sunnah* on the Phases of Developing Responsibility

Chapter Two:

Predestination and Freedom of Human Action

I. The Prominence of Human Effort in Revelation

II. Qur'anic Teachings

III. The *Sunnah* on Human Responsibility

Chapter Three:

Preserving Human Freedom of Choice and Action

I. Divine Facilitation *(yusr* or *taysir)*

II. Advanced Facilitation and *Istidraj*

Chapter One

The Qur'an and The *Sunnah* On The Importance of Human Effort in Choosing Conduct

I. Teachings of the Qur'an

The Qur'an is more explicit than the *sunnah* in dealing with the role of free choice in human effort. The Qur'an both gives and explains many examples of such free choice, a few of which may be noted:

> Was there (not) an immensely long period of time before man (appeared - a time) when he was not yet a thing to be thought of? Verily We created Man from a drop of mingled sperm, in order to try him, so we gave him (the gifts) of hearing and sight. We showed him the way: Whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will).[108]

At another place in the Qur'an we read:

> And (I call to witness) parent and offspring, verily, We have created Man into (a life of) pain, toil and struggle. Does he, then, think that no one has power over him? He boasts: I have spent abundant wealth. Does he, then, think that no one sees him? Have we not given him two eyes, and a tongue, and a pair of lips, and shown him the two highways (of good and evil)?[109]

At yet at another place the Qur'an says:

> By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its Wrong and its Right, truly he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails who corrupts it.[110]

If we look at the previous examples, we at once notice that these texts, no matter how different in style and approach, have a definite and clear message that fills us with confidence in the potentialities Allah has granted us to achieve our objectives in complete freedom. This freedom, which was granted to us together with its accessories, physical or spiritual, for implementing action, has always been the touchstone of good or bad behavior.

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[108] Qur'an 76:1-3
[109] Qur'an 90:3-10
[110] Qur'an 91:7-10

Compare the three above surahs:

Surah Al-Insan: We created man from a mixed sperm drop.

Surah Al-Balad : And (I call to witness) parent and offspring.

Surah Ash-Shams: By the soul and the proportion and order given to it.

The text here is very compact. It deals not only with man's origin but with how he was provided with the means of perception. Thus:

Surah Al-Insan: So We give him the gifts of hearing and sight.

Surah Al-Balad: Have we not given him two eyes?

Surah Al-Shams: By the soul and the proportion and order given to it.

We mention these texts twice because of their great significance in different contexts of the two surahs, Al-Insan and Al-Balad.

Surah Al-Insan: We showed him the way.

Surah Al-Balad: And We showed him the two highways (of good and evil).

Surah Al-Shams: Then He inspired it (with the knowledge of) what is wrong for it and what is right for it.

Again:

Surah Al-Insan: Whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will).

Surah Al-Shams: Truly he succeeds who purifies it and he fails who corrupts it.

Surah Al-Balad: Then will he be of those who believe and enjoin patience (constancy and self-restraint), and enjoin deeds of kindness and compassion, but those who reject Our signs, are the (unhappy) companions of the left hand.

Surah Al-Insan is more explicit about the "trial" of man, whereas in Surah Al-Balad this is clear from the context: "Does he, then, think that no one has power over him? He boasts: I have spent abundant wealth. Does he, then, think that no one sees him? Have we not given him two eyes? and a tongue, and a pair of lips? and shown him the two highways (of good and evil)? But he would not try to ascend the steep uphill road?"

In Surah Al-Shams the reference to the trial of man is obvious from the context: "Then He inspired it (with the knowledge of) what is wrong for it, and what is right for it."

Five meanings or teachings run through these and other Qur'anic

texts mentioned in these examples and elsewhere. The five, as found in Surah Al-Insan (Man), are:

1. A human being in the first stages of evolution is powerless and a thing unmentionable (a mere mixed sperm drop).

2. He is "tried" for a wise purpose, i.e., "We wanted to test him," as clearly set out in the very beginning of the Surah.

3. He is equipped with means or tools for this trial: i.e., "So We granted him (gifts of) hearing and sight."

4. Besides this, man is provided with guidance through revelation: i.e., "We showed him the way."

5. Man has free choice in using these capabilities, i.e., "Whether he be grateful or ungrateful rests on his will."

Here we see a purposeful comparison between the development of a human being and the corresponding increase in the burden of his responsibilities.

Consider again the first verse of surah Al-Insan: "Has there not been over man a long period of time, when he was nothing (not even) mentioned?" This very pertinent question highlights the great change that comes over man after he receives the gifts of hearing and sight from Allah, the Exalted. This rhetorical question contrasts the state of a sperm-drop with its subsequent perfection and culmination in human form.

Now what power, if any, does this insignificant sperm drop possess to choose and act freely for good or evil? Is there any comparison between this and the tremendous powers that the same sperm-drop comes to possess later on as a human being? The contrast between the humble origin of man in a worthless sperm-drop and the hearing and seeing human being is so real that it renders inconsequential any effort to diminish the importance of human capabilities and freedom of choice at a time of trial.

A trial or test normally has results. The responsibility both for making a choice (between good and evil) and for its consequences rests with man alone, especially after he has been given the gifts of hearing and sight and after everything is fully explained to him.

The last quotation above, verses 7-11 of Surah al Balad, stresses man's freedom to make his own decision with the help of the powers granted to him by Allah. Furthermore, man is granted guidance and everything is made plain and clear to him, and he is also continuously admonished in diverse ways in order to instruct and teach him the commandments, his obligations, and what he should and should not

do, sometimes exhorting him and giving him glad tidings and sometimes warning him against the evil consequences of making a wrong choice. But the final decision remains with man; it is up to him to decide which way he wants to follow.

This has been summed up by the verse: "We showed him the way: whether he be grateful or ungrateful (rests on his will)." The word "*hadainahu*" (we showed him or guided him) is very significant and must be understood correctly to avoid any confusion. In the above verse it means showing the ways of good as well as the ways of evil. Ibn Kathir says: "The words of Allah, 'We showed him the way,' means Allah made the way clear to man and advised him to follow the good way, as we read in the verse, 'As to the Thamud We gave them guidance, but they preferred blindness (of heart) to guidance,'[111] or in the verse, 'And We showed him the two highways,'[112] which means We clarified to him both ways, the good and the evil." This is the opinion of 'Ikrima, Mujahid, and the majority of Muslim scholars. Ibn Kathir further on says that the state of gratitude or ingratitude can result from Allah's clarification of the different ways open to man. This explanation by Ibn Kathir of the word "*hadainahu*" (we guided him) is designed to remove the common misunderstanding generally found among people that this term is confined to guidance through Revelation only. In fact, in the present context it means no more than clarification and illustration of the good and the bad ways that man may follow (depending on his free choice).

This linguistic explanation of the word has been given here as an illustration only. Such a definition of the word is fully compatible with true faith, which teaches us that guidance, whether of the heart or of the body, comes only from Allah. Thus we read:

> He whom Allah guides is rightly guided,
> but he whom Allah leaves to stray,
> for him will you find no protector to lead him
> to the Right way.[113]

We shall consider the difference between public Revelation *(wahy)* and private inspiration *(ilham)* later when we deal with Divine Providence and the will of Allah's creatures.

The Qur'an has adopted a consistent and clear method in illustrating

[111] Qur'an 41:17
[112] Qur'an 90:10
[113] Qur'an 17:17

the point that free will is vital in determining man's responsibility for his actions, whether good or bad. The Qur'an stresses the fact that man is responsible for what he does, and exhorts him to play an active role in deciding his course of action, because this is what befits both his position and natural disposition and because the freedom of choice and action that he has been granted is real and no mere illusion.

Denial of free will, in fact, is tantamount to ingratitude as it rejects one of the greatest blessings of Allah to man without any plausible reason or justification. Such a denial often is merely a vain attempt to ignore and deny the blessings of Allah by those who would like to wriggle out of their responsibilities and obligations.

II. *Teachings Of The Sunnah On The Different Phases Of Developing Responsibility*

The pure *sunnah* has a vast store of ahadith dealing with the different stages of developing responsibility in human effort, namely, the stages of: intention, free choice in the initial stages, and, later on, behavior, action and practice. We have selected only the ahadith that cover the three phases of human life:

1. the beginning of man's life;
2. human life after puberty and the relevant obligations; and
3. the final phase, described in the ahadith as the stage when man shall receive reward or punishment after death for his freely-chosen deeds during his earthly existence.

A. *Ahadith on the First Phase of Human Life*

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "No baby is born but with the pure (Islamic) nature; then his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."[114]

Abu Yala, Al-Tabrani and Al-Baihaqi relate from Al-Aswad ibn Sarei that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Every newborn baby is born with the pure (Islamic) nature until he learns to speak. Then his parents turn him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.[115]

In both of these ahadith there is a clear indication that guidance, faith, and goodness, as well as their opposite qualities, are closely related to methods of guidance and education. A family exercises a real influence on children. It shapes them into whatever form it likes.

[114] Bukhari and Muslim

[115] *Musnad* (Abu Yala), *Al-Kabir* (Al-Tabrani), and *Sunnan* (Al-Baihaqi).

But a child, though not responsible when exposed to these external influences (mentioned in the hadith), is still free as a person to respond to them or not.

The hadith mentions four possible faiths. The first possibility is that the child will embrace Islam if his parents bring him up in accordance with his true nature. The other possibilities are that he will become a Jew or a Christian or a Magian, in case his parents fail to bring him up as a Muslim. All these possibilities involve human initiative by parents without any compulsion or coercion. The fourth possibility (Magianism) includes all the various forms of blasphemy.

Jabir relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Every newborn baby is born with a true (Islamic) nature until his tongue reveals what his heart cherishes: either gratitude or ingratitude."[116] There are many other ahadith to the same effect, but we need not develop this point further.

B. *Ahadith on the Second Phase When Man Comes of Age and Incurs Obligations from Allah.*

This is the period when a man attains maturity and is ready independently to shoulder certain obligations unlike the early stage when his parents carried the burden of these responsibilities.

Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Purification is half of the faith, and '*Al-Hamdu Lillahi*' (All praise belongs to Allah) fills the balance, and '*subhanallah*' (Allah is free from all weaknesses) fills up the entire space between the heavens and the earth. *Salah* (daily obligatory prayers) is a light; charity is an evidence of one's virtue and righteousness; patience is an illumination; and the Qur'an is an evidence either for you or against you. Every day a person ransoms his soul and frees it or destroys and ruins it."[117]

Al-Tabrani in his work *Al-Kabir* relates from Umran that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "There is no Muslim judge but there are two angels that accompany him and guide him to what is right so long as he is not otherwise inclined. In case he is otherwise inclined and is deliberately unjust, then the two angels declare themselves free of his action, and give him over to his own (evil) self."[118]

Imam Ahmad relates from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "No one leaves his home but finds two banners

[116] *Musnad*, Ahmad bin Hanbal
[117] Ahmad, Muslim, and Tirmidhi; it is a sound hadith.
[118] *Al-Jami Al-Saghir*, Al-Siyyuti; it is a sound hadith.

waiting at his door: one of them in the hand of an angel and the other in the hand of a devil. If he intends to do what pleases Allah the angel will follow him with his standard, and he remains under the banner of the angel until he returns to his house, but if he sets out for what displeases Allah the devil with his banner follows him about, and he remains under the devil's banner until he returns to his house."[119]

In the last hadith, the positive role of free will and human initiative is quite obvious, and we must take it in the precise way the Prophet meant it.

Ibn Abi Hatim relates from Abdullah ibn Mas'ud that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The devil has his own way of inciting people to make them follow him, while the angels have their own ways of persuasion. The devil incites to evil and instigates man to disbelieve, while the angel brings good tidings and encourages man to believe. If you find (yourselves) in this state, then know that it is from Allah and be grateful to Him for it. If on the other hand, you find the former, seek refuge with Allah from Satan."[120] Then the Prophet, peace be upon him, recited the Qur'anic verse: "Satan threatens you with poverty and bids you to unseemly conduct. Allah promises you His forgiveness and bounties, and Allah cares for all and he knows all things."[121]

Muslim on the authority of Ahvaz ibn Hammad Al-Majasha'i records that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Allah, the Exalted says: 'I created my servants as Muslims (by nature) but then the devils came upon them and caused them to deviate from their true religion.'"[122]

This hadith distinguishes very well the first two phases in man's life, that is, the stage of responsibility and obligations and the earlier stage of initial development. Muslim and Ahmad relate on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas'ud that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "There is none among you but has been assigned two companions: a jinn and an angel." Somebody asked: "Even you, O Messenger of Allah!" "Yes, even me," answered the Prophet, "but Allah helped me, therefore it can direct me only to good."[123] It may be noted here that this exception is due to the fact that all prophets are infallible.

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[119] *Musnad,* Ahmad

[120] See Ibn Abi Hatim, Al-Siyyuti (according to him this is a sound hadith). Tirmidhi, Nasa'i, and Ibn Hiban have also reported it.

[121] Qur'an 2:268

[122] This is part of a longer hadith given by Muslim in the chapter on paradise.

[123] Muslim in the chapter on the characteristics of believers; also see Ahmad and Al-Darimi.

Both the angels and the devil play only a persuasive role, which on the whole has no practical effect on the human will as such, with the result that man remains free to choose whichever way he may want to move without any outside intervention or interference. In other words, he and he alone is responsible for all his actions. Nevertheless, in some ahadith great emphasis is laid on good relations between believers and angels and the need to make these bonds still closer and stronger for noble and good ends. We have quoted above some of these ahadith so that we should be aware of their real purpose. This persuasive effect has the potential of becoming more than a mere inducement. We will dwell on this point when we take up the question of Divine help and favors.

Allah says: "But verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you, kind and honorable, writing down (your deeds): they know (and understand) all that you do."[124]

Ibn Kathir says: "This means, you have angels who watch over you and record all your actions. Therefore do not let them see you in a disgraceful position." Ibn Abi Hatim relates that he heard it from his father who heard it from Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Tanafasi, who heard it from Waki'e, who heard it from Sufiyan and Mas'ar, who heard from Alqama son of Marthad who heard Mujahid as saying that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Respect the respectable angels who write down all that you do and who leave you neither when you are in a state of ritual impurity nor when you go to the toilet. So when you wash yourselves do so behind a wall or a camel or let his brother hide him (from sight while he washes himself)."

Hafiz Abu Bakr Al-Bazzaz has also related this hadith in somewhat different words. According to his version Muhammad ibn Uthman ibn Karamah related that Abdullah ibn Musa told him that he heard from Hafs ibn Sulaiman who heard from Alqamah ibn Marthad who heard it from Mujahid that he heard Ibn Abbas saying that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Allah has indeed prohibited nudeness to you. So be considerate towards Allah's angels who always accompany you and never leave you except at three times: when you are in a toilet, when you go to your wives, and when you take a ritual bath. So when you take a bath in the open, cover yourself with your clothes or hide yourselves behind a wall or your camel."

[124]Qur'an 82:10-12

There are some other ahadith also which tell us how the angels descend one after the other at the *Fajr* (dawn) and the *'Asr* (afternoon) prayers to carry the report on prayers to Allah, the Almighty, Who is well aware of His servants.

Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Angels follow one after the other and walk about among you day and night. They meet at *Fajr* (dawn) and *'Asr* (afternoon) prayers. Those who were with you during the (previous) night ascend to Allah, Who asks them, though He knows all things: 'What were my servants doing when you left them?' They would say, 'When we left them, they were praying, and when we went to them, we found them praying.'"[125]

Another hadith reports Abu Hurairah as saying that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Every gathering of men in which Allah is glorified is surrounded by angels, and mercy encompasses it, and Allah mentions them to those who are with Him."[126]

Another hadith related by Bukhari says that angels go about the earth seeking those who remember and glorify Allah. When they come upon any gathering of such people they call each other and then surround them with their wings that spread up to the nearest heaven. "What do my servants say?" Allah, the Exalted, asks them, though He is well aware of all things. "They glorify you, exalt You, and extol You," the angels reply. "Have they seen Me?," asks Allah. "No, by Allah, they have not," they say. "What would they do if they saw me?" "They would worship you all the more intensely and glorify and celebrate your praises"...and so on until Allah says (to the angels): "Bear witness, then, that I have forgiven them!" At this an angel will say: "But there is some one with them who in reality is not of them, and has gone there with an ulterior motive!" Allah will say: "Anybody sitting with such people shall not be deprived."[127]

These ahadith, as we have said, seek to urge the Muslims to foster and develop good relations with angels who help them in choosing and following the desirable path of righteousness. Concern about improving one's relations with angels leaves no room for the devil's machinations. The emphasis and the oft-repeated advice about fostering good relations with angels shows that it cannot be accomplished

[125] Bukhari and Muslim
[126] Muslim, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and Ahmad.
[127] Bukhari and Tirmidhi

but through a voluntary effort by man; hence the need to warn him against the hazards of neglecting them in the course of his life.

At this point we would like to make two observations. In the first place, we note that the ahadith mention various influences, such as parents, family, one's environment during childhood, and then one's own personality during the phase of puberty and its susceptibility to good tendencies (symbolized by the friendship with angels) or to evil promptings (symbolized by the relationship with devils). We observe that not once does the Prophet, peace be upon him, refer to Divine Providence in any of the ahadith quoted above. The only exception is the hadith telling us that every child is born with a pure (Islamic) nature and is capable of choosing and following the path of virtue and purity at an age when he is still free of all obligations, many years before he attains the age of legal responsibility.

The fact that the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not mention Divine Providence does not at all limit the Divine Will or belittle its importance as the supreme Supervisory Power. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not mention it in order to show that Divine Providence works in a way that does not in the least impinge upon man's freedom of choice and action. Hence there was no need to bring in Divine Providence. In a discussion on man's freedom and responsibility, insha'Allah, we shall elaborate on this point later.

The second observation is equally important. The Qur'an asserts that the Devil's insinuations, as mentioned in the Qur'an and ahadith, do not in any practical sense have the power to shape or mold man's mode of action or behavior. The Qur'an tells us that on the Day of Judgement Satan will tell his followers: "I had no authority over you except to call you, but you listened to me; so reproach me not, but reproach your own (evil) selves.[128]

C. *Ahadith on the Third Phase: the Hereafter*

The fact that man has been given freedom of choice and action is indisputably confirmed and ratified by both the Qur'an and the *sunnah*.

While some ahadith give a realistic picture of the problem in which we find angels and devils with their ensigns of good and evil ready to follow man if he should choose to go their way, there are others that go further than this and teach us that Divine Justice treats all people,

[128]Qur'an 14:22

believers as well as the non-believers, on an equitable basis. Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* and Al-Hakim in his *Al-Mustadrik* relate from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Everybody in Paradise shall see his place in hell and say, 'If Allah had not guided me (that is where I would now be).' And this will make him thank Allah. Similarly everybody in hell shall also see his place in Paradise and say, 'O, would that Allah had guided me to this place.' And this will become a regret and a grief for him."'

Commenting on the verse, "Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the word that stands firm, in this world and in the Hereafter,"[129] Ibn Kathir has mentioned certain ahadith, including the following. Imam Abd ibn Hamid relates in his *Musnad* that Yunus ibn Muhammad heard Shaiban ibn Abdur Rahman who heard from Qatada who reported from Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "When a man is put in his grave, and his friends go away and he hears the sound of their footsteps, two angels come to him and cause him to sit up. (They ask:) 'What do you say about this man (i.e., about the Prophet Muhammad?)' If he is a believer he says: 'I bear witness that he is the servant and messenger of Allah.' At this the angels will say: 'Look! That was your place in Hell, but Allah has given you a seat in Paradise instead.'" The Prophet, peace be upon him, says he would be shown both of these places. Qatada says the Prophet also told us that his grave would be broadened by seventy cubits and on the Resurrection Day will be covered with green.

Imam Ahmad relates from Yahya ibn Sa'id that he heard from Ibn Jarij who heard it from Abu Al-Zubair who asked Jabir ibn Abdullah about the torment of the grave, whereupon he told him that he heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say, "This community will be tried in graves. When a believer is put in the grave and his friends go back to their homes, an extremely fearsome angel comes to him and asks him: 'What did you say about this man?' A true believer says: 'He is a messenger and servant of Allah.' At this the angel says: 'Look at your place in Hell, Allah has saved you from it and has given you a place in Paradise instead.' He sees both these places, and the believer says: 'Let me tell this good news to my family!' 'Calm down!' replies the angel. A hypocrite, on the other hand, sits up after his family leaves him in his grave. 'What did you say about this man?' He will say: 'I don't

[129] Qur'an 14:27

know. I said what I heard others say about him.' The angel will say to him: 'Look this was your place in Paradise, but you have been allotted a place in Hell instead'." Jabir added: "I heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say: 'Every dead person shall be resurrected in a state similar to the one in which he dies.' Thus a believer would be brought to life as a believer and a hypocrite as a hypocrite."[130]

Imam Ahmad relates from Abu Amir that Ibad ibn Rashid told him that he heard from Dawud ibn Abi Himad and he from Abi Nadhra and he from Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri who said: "We attended a funeral along with the Prophet, peace be upon him, who said: 'O People! This community will be tried in their graves. When a person is put in his grave and his people leave him, an angel with an iron hammer comes to him and makes him sit up: "What did you say about this man?" If he is a believer he says: "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Mohammad is His servant and Messenger." He says: "You are right." Then a door is opened for him to hell and the angel says: "Look! This would have been your place in hell if you had disbelieved but as you believe in your Lord, this will be your place instead." Then a door is opened for him to Paradise. Thereupon he tries to get up and walk to it but the angel stops him. His grave is widened. But if he is an unbeliever or a hypocrite, he is asked: "What did you say about this (man)." He replies: "I do not know. I only heard people saying something about him." He will be told: "You did not (try to) know, or follow, or be guided." Then a door to Paradise is opened for him, and he is told: "This would have been your place if you had believed in your Lord, but you rejected Him so Allah, the Exalted, has changed it with this place instead." Then a door to hell is opened for him, and the angel strikes him with the hammer at which he will yell so loudly that all the creatures of Allah shall hear it except men and jinn.'"

Some people asked the Prophet, peace be upon him: "O Messenger of Allah! Can anybody see an angel with a hammer in hand and not collapse (with fear)?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, recited (the Qur'anic verse): "Allah will establish in strength those who believe, with the word that stands firm, in this world and in the hereafter."[131]

From the above three ahadith the crucial importance of human initiative and effort is quite obvious. In early childhood, parents and

[130]This is a sound hadith according to the criterion of Muslim.
[131]Qur'an 14:27

other guardians of a child bear the responsibility for a baby with a pure (Islamic) nature. Those responsible for him decide for him.

When he comes of age he becomes legally responsible for all his actions. It is up to him then to follow either the proponents of good or the votaries of evil, the angels or the devil and his friends, whether men or jinn. The initiative and the decision, however, still remains with man, and accordingly he alone is responsible for all his deeds.

There are many ahadith that explain the advantages of being friendly with angels and warn man against the hazards of taking devils for friends, but they leave the final decision to man. He alone by his own free choice decides whether to ransom or ruin his soul. The ahadith dealing with the last stage emphatically underscore the fact that man shall bear full responsibility for his performance in this world on the Day of Judgement in accordance with the strictest sense of justice and equity, which is a logical consequence of man being granted the freedom of choice and action. If he decides to choose and follow the path of righteousness he will be given a place in Paradise, whereas if he decides otherwise he will be consigned to Hell, for that is what he chose for himself. The divine omniscience regarding all past and future events is not referred to in the ahadith dealing with this particular stage, for it does not in itself affect the power of each person to consign himself or herself in either of the two places, which are always kept ready for anyone who should deserve them. These two places, Hell and Paradise, which are always ready to receive any man, inspire feelings of love and gratitude in the heart of a good person, while in the case of a sinner they become a source of grief and of sorrow for choosing such an evil place.

In the light of these Qur'anic verses and ahadith we may safely conclude that both the Qur'an and the *sunnah* agree that Allah has granted man the full ability to choose and follow the path of virtue as well as that of evil, depending solely on how he is inclined or what he is after. Therefore to deny this ability of man is diametrically opposite to what the Qur'an and hadith - the two prime sources of Islam - prescribe.

Chapter Two

Predestination and Freedom of Human Action

I. *The Prominence of Human Effort in Revelation*

Many revealed texts concentrate on this subject. Both the Qur'an and the *sunnah* give basic importance to human effort, whether it is directed to good or evil purposes. The texts are quite clear and we should not ignore their obvious meanings or try to find far fetched hidden meanings. This does not in any way contradict the unchallenged supremacy of the Will of Allah over all other wills or powers. But how do we resolve this problem?

In fact, there is no problem at all; so we don't need to seek a solution. The intended meanings of the texts are quite obvious. What is meant in the following texts is the responsibility for free choice in all one's actions. How different the human will is from the Providence of Allah, the Creator, Who will call everybody to account for his deeds. There is no confusion in any of these texts. The Qur'an makes this distinction between the Divine Will and human wills quite clear. For example, "If some good befalls them, they say: 'This is from Allah;' but if evil, they say: ' This is from you.' Say: 'All things are from Allah.' But what has come to these people, that they fail to understand a single fact? Whatever good (O man!) happens to you, is from Allah; but whatever evil happens to you, is from your (own) soul. And We have sent you as an apostle to (instruct) mankind. And enough is Allah for a witness."[132]

Later, insha' Allah, we will deal with the relationship between Divine Providence and man's will. The prominence given to human will in the Qur'anic verses alluded to below goes to show that man is responsible for all his deeds. Even when predestination is mentioned, the Qur'an makes it clear that man shall receive reward for his good deeds or suffer punishment for the evil ones. One of the characteristics of Revelation is that it represents the truth, which stands for power, strength, reassurance, confidence, and security. Allah, the Mighty, the Confident, the Secure, does not fear what we creatures fear. He gives everything its due. If he decides to grant a creature something, for example, freedom of action, He does not tyrannize it like other

[132]Qur'an 4:78

creatures might do. Thus there is a world of difference between the human will and Divine Providence. We alluded to this fact in passing when we mentioned Allah's omniscience. He knows both what was and what will be. Similarly the hadith tells us that everybody shall be shown his two places in Paradise and Hell. Allah knows, of course, which one of these every man is ultimately destined to land in, but the hadith does not say anything about it. The reason is that the point at issue is the importance of human initiative and effort, for which he finally is given a reward or punishment in the Hereafter. Everything necessary about this stage has been stated quite plainly so that no one may have any excuse in the Hereafter for failing to do his duty. The story of truth and wisdom is in fact the story of justice and mercy!

Having clarified this important point let us now examine the Qur'anic verses that deal with human effort and emphasize its importance.

II. *Qur'anic Teachings*

The Qur'an is always very explicit, clear, and effective concerning such subjects. This is quite natural, for Allah is the Creator of man and undoubtedly His is the final word on any subject.

Many of the Qur'anic verses give great prominence to human effort and underline its significance and importance. For the sake of brevity we shall refer here to only a few of these verses.

In both Surah Al-Anfal and Surah Al-Ra'd, we find two verses almost identical in meaning and words. The first reads: "(This is so) because Allah will never change the grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls.[133] And the second one says: "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change their inner selves."[134]

These excerpts from these two verses are sufficient to prove our point, and both are quite emphatic on this point.

We should also look at the general context of the two verses in order better to understand their significance in affirming man's freedom of action as a prerequisite to bearing any responsibility for his actions.

The context in Surah Al-Anfal is the following:

> If you could see when the angels take the souls of unbelievers (at death, how) they smite the (unbelievers') faces

[133] Qur'an 8:53
[134] Qur'an 13:11

> and their backs, (saying): "Taste the penalty of the blazing fire because of (the deeds) which your (own) hands set forth; for Allah is never unjust to His servants; (their deeds were) after the manner of the people of Pharaoh and of those before them. They rejected the signs of Allah, and Allah punished them for their crimes, for Allah is strong and strict in punishment: (all this is so) because Allah will never change the grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls; and verily Allah is He who hears and knows (all). (Their deeds were) after the manner of people of Pharaoh and those before them; they treated as false the signs of their Lord: So we destroyed them for their crimes, and We drowned the people of Pharaoh, for they were all oppressors and wrongdoers.[135]

Pharaoh and his people and those before them and after them were duly punished for the crimes they committed. Allah is above any injustice. It is they who wronged their own selves. They were punished and ruined for their sins and crimes. The general principle in this context is quite clear, namely, "Allah never changes the grace which He bestows on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls." It is man who takes the initiative and embarks upon good or evil; Allah is never unjust to His servants.

Now let us turn our attention to Surah Al-Ra'd and look at the general context of the quoted verse:

> They ask you to hasten on the evil in preference to the good; yet there have come to pass, before them, (many) exemplary punishments! But verily your Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrongdoing. And verily your Lord is (also) strict in punishment. And the unbelievers say: "Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?" But you are truly a warner, and for every people (there is) a guide. Surely Allah knows what every female (womb) bears, by how much the wombs fall short (of their time or number) or exceed. Every single thing is before His sight in (due) proportion. He knows the unseen and that which is open. He is the Great, the Most High. It is the same (to Him) whether any of you conceal his speech or declare it openly; whether he lie hid by night or walk forth freely by day. For each (such person) there are (angels) in

[135] Qur'an 8:50-54

succession, before and behind him; they guard him by command of Allah. Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change their inner selves. But when (once) Allah wills a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect them.[136]

The initiative of these people for evil rather than good is clear from the words: "they ask you to hasten on the evil in preference to the good." With respect to the previous peoples also we are told that they are inclined to evil and preferred it to goodness and truth. "And yet have there come to pass, before them, (many) exemplary punishments!" Any suggestion of injustice by Allah is negated by a positive assertion that He is full of forgiveness and forgives men despite their sins and despite His absolute power to punish them. The disbelievers asked the Prophet to bring a sign, though there was no lack of signs in the life around them, so they were told that the Prophet's mission is only to warn and offer guidance. They were also told that Allah's knowledge and wisdom comprehends everything including the creation of man. He knows all, that which is secret as well that which is open, the seen as well as the unseen. It is out of His bounty and mercy that He makes the angels look after and guard His servants.

In this context, where mercy, grace, warning, and Divine Guidance are found side by side, we confront some of the rebellious and thankless people, both in the present as well as in the past, who reject the blessings of their Lord and are replaced by Him with His obedient and thankful servants.

This leads us to the general principle: "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change their inner selves," and that "when (once) Allah wills a people's punishment, there can be no turning it back, nor will they find, besides Him, any to protect them." At many places in the Qur'an this principle is reiterated. We give below some of these verses:

As to the Thamud, We gave them guidance, but they preferred blindness (of heart) to guidance.[137]

And be not like those who forgot Allah; and He made them forget their own souls! Such are the rebellious transgressors![138]

Has not the story reached you, of those who rejected faith

[136]Qur'an 13:6-11
[137]Qur'an 41:17
[138]Qur'an 59:19

aforetime? so they tasted the evil result of their conduct; and they had a grevious penalty. That was because there came to them messengers with clear signs, but they said: "Shall (mere) human beings direct us?" So they rejected (the message and turned away). But Allah can do without (them); and Allah is free of all needs and worthy of all praise.[139]

Then when they went wrong, Allah let their hearts go wrong.[140]

But to those who receive guidance, He increases the (light of) guidance, and bestows on them their piety and restraint (from evil).[141]

In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease.[142]

Yea, for those who believe, their faith is increased, and they do rejoice. But for those in whose hearts is a disease, it will add doubt to their doubt.[143]

This (is so) because they love the life of this world better than the Hereafter.[144]

And Allah does advance in guidance those who seek guidance.[145]

O you who believe! If you will aid (the cause of) Allah, He will aid you, and plant your feet firmly.[146]

Is then one who is on a clear (path) from his Lord no better than one to whom the evil of his conduct seems pleasing, and such as follow their own lusts?[147]

These few examples can be easily checked for their general context in the book of Allah as we did in the case of the two verses of Surahs Al-Anfal and Al-Ra'd. There are many more verses in the Qur'an similar to the ones quoted above, but to deal with them here requires too much space and time. We believe, however, that this brief summary is sufficient to underscore the point that we want to bring home.

[139] Qur'an 64:5-6
[140] Qur'an 61:5
[141] Qur'an 47:17
[142] Qur'an 2:10
[143] Qur'an 9:124-125
[144] Qur'an 16:107
[145] Qur'an 19:76
[146] Qur'an 47:7
[147] Qur'an 47:14

III. *The Sunnah on Human Responsibility.*

Here we shall quote seven representative ahadith:

1) A sound hadith related by Muslim from Abu Dhar says that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that Allah says: "O My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself, and have also forbidden it among you, so do not treat each other unjustly. O My servants! It is your deeds for which I will call you to account. Whoever receives any good, he should be thankful to Allah, and he whom any misfortune befalls should blame no one but his own self for it.[148]

2) In a *qudsi*[149] hadith recorded by Bukhari we read: "If the servant comes towards Me an inch I go towards him a cubit, and if he comes to Me a cubit I go towards him a whole fathom, and if he comes to Me walking I go to him running."[150]

3) Allah says (in another *qudsi* hadith): "If my servant loves to meet Me, I also love to meet him, but if he is averse to meeting Me I also am averse to meeting him."[151]

4) In another such hadith, Allah says: "O son of Adam! If you rise to your feet intending to come to me, I shall walk to you and if you walk to me, I shall come running to you."

5) In another such hadith, Allah says: " O son of Adam! If you offer four *rakahs* (of *salah*) at daybreak without fail, I shall help you with the rest of the day."[152]

6) Another hadith tells us that Allah revealed to Prophet Dawud: "There is no servant of Mine who sincerely seeks refuge with Me, and does not repose his trust in any of My creatures, but I find a way out for him even if all the heavens and those in them be his deadly enemies. And there is no servant of Mine who seeks refuge with any one of My creatures rather than with Me, and I know that is what he really seeks, but I would truly make him lose all hope, and nothing in the heavens or on the earth would be of any help to him. And there is no servant of mine who sincerely obeys Me but I would give him even before he asks me and would forgive him even before he asks me for forgiveness."[153]

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[148] Muslim

[149] A hadith in which the Prophet relates from Allah directly.

[150] Bukhari and Muslim

[151] Malik, Bukhari, and Nasa'i, on the authority of Abu Hurairah.

[152] It is a sound hadith and is related by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, and Al-Tabrani (*Al-Jami' Saghir*).

[153] Ibn Asakar, on the authority of Ka'b ibn Malik; it is a sound hadith (*Al-Jami' al-Saghir*).

7) In still another *qudsi* hadith, Allah says: "I am as My servant thinks of Me, so let him think of Me as he wishes."[154]

These seven ahadith quite clearly and explicitly define man's responsibility by emphasizing human freedom without in the least encroaching upon the overall supremacy of the Divine Will in the universe. Bearing this essential fact in mind, we may now proceed to look at the principles embodied in the above ahadith.

The first hadith consists of the following three parts:

1) "O My servants I have forbidden injustice to Myself, and have also forbidden it among you, so do not wrong one another!";
2) "O My servants it is for your deeds that I shall call you to account"; and
3) "So whoever receives any good he should thank Allah for it, and he who is treated otherwise should blame no one but himself for it."

It is not difficult to realize that the first part enunciates the rule of the absolute Justice of Allah, Who has forbidden injustice to Himself and also to His servants and has commanded them to avoid it. This should remove once and for all any doubts concerning the freedom that Allah has granted man in this life.

The second part specifies the divine rule of justice as applied to man and his freedom of choice and action. It states emphatically and categorically that "it is only your own deeds for which I shall call you to account," which means, in other words, that the enforcement of the divine will does not interfere with the realization of absolute divine justice. Man shall be rewarded or punished only for actions that are the result of his own free choice and will. It is for these that he shall be called to account before his Lord.

The third part of the hadith reiterates the human responsibility in choosing the path of good or evil. It says: "He who receives any good, should thank Allah, and he whom any misfortune befalls should remember that no one is to blame for it but himself."

Can there be anything more explicit than these ahadith on the question of human freedom of choice and action? Can there be any room for doubt or argument on this point?

If we look at the second *qudsi* hadith, we should find no difficulty in appreciating the importance it attaches to human responsibility. "If

[154] Al-Tabrani, *Al-Kabir*. Al-Hakim has related it. It is a sound hadith (*Al-Jami' Al-Saghir*).

My servant comes towards Me an inch I go towards him a whole fathom, and if he comes walking, I go to him running." This indicates that the results and the reward of an act depend entirely on the way a person uses or abuses his freedom of choice and action. These ahadith also show that no matter how small or insignificant an action is, it is fully rewarded in accordance with the good intentions of a person. The reward is increased in proportion to a corresponding rise in the initial level of a man's commitment. All this is put in a form that explains the various conditions under which this happens, e.g., if a servant moves an inch closer to Allah, He goes to him a cubit, and if he goes a cubit, Allah comes closer to him by a whole fathom, and if he goes towards Him walking, He comes to man running.

The third, the fourth and the fifth ahadith also underline the same essential fact: 3) "If my servant desires to meet me, I also like to meet him, and if he is averse to meeting me, I shall also be averse to meeting him;" 4) "Rise to your feet to come to Me, and I shall come walking to you, and walk toward Me, and I shall come running to you; and 5) "If you offer four *rakahs* (*salah*) at daybreak without fail I shall help you with the rest of the day."

We notice that the last hadith, in mentioning that good action at daybreak brings its reward at the end of the day, explicitly makes this conditional on the action of man himself. The words "if you offer without fail" leave no doubt whatever about the freedom of choice and action enjoyed by man.

The sixth hadith says: "If any servant of Mine sincerely seeks refuge with Me, and does not place his trust in any of creatures, I will find a way out for him, even if the heavens and all those in them are against him. And if there is any servant of Mine who seeks refuge with any of My creatures instead of with Me ... then nothing in the heavens or earth would be of any help to him." Here again it is man who takes the first step toward good or evil. And it is man's freedom of choice and action on which a proper reward for his endeavors is based.

The seventh hadith serves to establish the general principle that may be deduced from the above six and other similar ahadith. "I am as My servant thinks of Me, so let him think of Me as he may wish." Clearly, it is man who decides which way he is to move; he is free to choose to follow either a good or an evil course, for which he is later recompensed.

The above *qudsi* ahadith are quite explicit with regard to man's freedom of choice and action, for justice requires that man must have

this freedom before he is questioned about the use or misuse of it. There are many other ahadith that support this assertion. Below are some of them.

Anas relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Allah's pleasure when any of His servants repents and comes to Him penitent is far greater than what any one of you feels when he finds his camel after losing it in a barren waterless desert."[155]

Despite this eagerness and pleasure with which Allah receives His penitent servants, we find that many people persist in their error and refuse to return to Him. This attitude does not please Him for, as the hadith tells us, He wants His servants to repent and return to Him, yet He does not force anybody to do so. It is up to man to repent and reform himself or to refuse and persist in his evil ways.

Out of His extreme beneficence, over and above His justice, Allah not only grants man freedom of choice and action but has blessed him with instinctive insight and has revealed the Qur'an for his guidance onto the path of righteousness.

Al-Nawas narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Allah, the Exalted, has set forth a parable. On either side of the straight path there is a wall. In these walls there are some doors that are covered with curtains. A crier who stands by the entrance of the straight path calls out: 'O people! Walk on the straight path, all of you, walk straight and do not deviate from the straight path.' There is also another crier calling out from above. When man tries to lift a curtain or open any of these doors he says: 'Woe to you, don't open it, for if you do, you would want to enter.' The straight path in this parable is Islam, the two walls are the laws of Allah, and the doors in these walls represent the things that are forbidden. The crier at the entrance of the path is Allah's Book and the crier from above is the preacher that has been placed in the heart of every Muslim."[156]

Says the Qur'an: "(Allah) Most Gracious! It is He who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man; He has taught him speech (and given him intelligence)."[157] Now when a man chooses to ignore all these blessings of Allah upon him and sets out to misuse his freedom of choice and action, granted to him by Allah, he is given yet more latitude and

[155] Bukhari and Muslim
[156] Ahmad, *Musnad;* Al-Hakim, *Al-Mustadrik* (*Al-Jami'al-Saghir*)
[157] Qur'an 55:1-4

chance to reform himself and wipe off the evil effects of his past misdeeds, for Allah is ever so merciful and gracious to man.

Abu Umama relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The angel who is on the right (and whose job is to record one's good deeds) has predominance over the angel who is on the left (and whose job is to record one's bad deeds). If one does something good, he at once records ten times the like thereof for him. If, on the other hand, one does something bad and the angel on the left wants to record it, the angel on the right asks him 'Just hold on.' So he delays the recording of the bad deed for six hours. If during this time the wrongdoer asks Allah for forgiveness, the angel would not record the bad deed against him. In case he fails to ask for forgiveness only one bad deed would be recorded," [158] even if it is one of the most serious sins. Islam encourages man to make amends for any misdemeanor by using his freedom of choice and action properly, for through his will and effort man can wipe off the evil effects of his previous misdeeds.

A case in point is the tradition recorded by Ibn Jarir on the authority of Ibn Abbas that he said: "A man from Medina embraced Islam, then he apostatized and reverted to paganism. Then he felt repentant and sent for his people and sent them to the Prophet, peace be upon him, to ask him if there was any hope of his repentance being accepted (and rejoining the Muslims). Thereupon these verses were revealed: "How shall Allah guide those who reject faith after they have accepted it and borne witness that the Messenger was true and that clear signs had come to them? But Allah guides not a people (who are) unjust. The reward for such is that on them (rests) the curse of Allah, of His angels and of all mankind. In that will they dwell; nor will their penalty be lightened, nor respite be their (lot); except for those who repent (even) after that, and make amends; for verily Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." [159] Thereupon his people sent for him and he came and embraced Islam. [160] Abd-al-Raza relates from Jafar ibn Sulaiman who heard Hameed Al-Araj as saying that Mujahid said: "Al-Harith ibn Swaid came and accepted Islam at the hands of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Then he reverted back to *kufr* and returned to his people. Thereupon the following verses were revealed: 'How shall Allah guide

[158] Al-Tabrani, *Al-Kabir;* and Al-Baihaqi, *Shi'ab Al-Iman.* It is a sound hadith (*Al-Jami' Al-Saghir*).

[159] Qur'an 3:86-89

[160] Nasa'i, Al-Hakim, Ibn Habban (all relate from Dawud ibn Abi Hindbah.

those who reject faith after they have accepted it and borne witness that the Messenger was true and that clear signs had come to them?' One of his people recited these verses to Al-Harith, to which he said 'By Allah, as far as I know you are truthful, and indeed the Messenger of Allah is more truthful than you are and Allah is more truthful than all (of you) three.''' He added, ''And then Al-Harith returned, became a Muslim, and proved to be a good one.''[161]

Furthermore, the *sunnah* shows us the best way to develop and use one's freedom of choice and action. It teaches us how to embark upon any action properly so as to ensure good and favorable results and avoid harmful and evil consequences both in this world as well as in the hereafter.

Ibn Mas'ud relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: ''Adhere to the the truth, for the truth leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise. A person continues to speak the truth until (at last) his name is written down with Allah as a truthful person. And avoid falsehood, for falsehood leads to shameful deeds, and shameful deeds lead to Hell. A person continues to tell lies until (at last) his name is recorded with Allah as a liar.''[162]

This hadith provides man with a key to the higher secrets of life in the form of a general principle. The words of the Prophet, peace be upon him, ''until his name is written down with Allah as a truthful person,'' clearly presume certain phases that precede this particular stage when one is finally judged to be a truthful person in the sight of Allah, for example, the stage of desire and willingness to abide by the truth which leads one to *birr*[163] or righteousness.

Thus the Qur'an states: ''But it is righteousness to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves: to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts that you have made; and to be firm and patient in pain or suffering and adversity and throughout all periods of panic: such are the people of truth, the righteous.''[164]

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[161] Ibn Kathir: Commentary on Surah Al-i-Imran

[162] Ahmad, *Musnad;* Bukhari; Chapter Al-Adab, Muslim and Tirmidhi (*Al-Jami' Saghir*).

[163] *Birr,* an Arabic term used in the Qur'an that connotes a wide range of virtues.

[164] Qur'an 2:177

Obviously righteousness in this verse includes various aspects of life, including faith, worship, and a moral code of behavior. It also affirms a direct relationship between righteousness and truthfulness, for Allah Himself says of those righteous men and woman: "Such are the People of truth."

The reward of the righteousness stated in the latter part of the above hadith from Ibn Mas'ud in the words: "Righteousness leads to Paradise," is in complete harmony with the statement of the Qur'an. This happy result, however, is preceded by a stage when man is required to be steadfast and patient in following the path of virtue once he has decided to follow and to adhere to it. It is this stage to which the words of the Prophet, peace be upon him, "a man continues to be truthful and adhere to the truth" allude. It is only after having passed through all these stages successfully that a man reaches a point where in the words of the hadith he is "written down with Allah as a truthful man."

The hadith clearly tells us that before a man is recorded for eternity as a truthful person he has to go through a number of phases, each requiring his active initiative and a willing effort on his part without any external interference from any side. This is clear from the contrast portrayed in the hadith between man's state of choosing and abiding willingly and consciously at each and every step by the dictates of truth and his state of opting for the evil and persisting therein. Obviously it is man alone who decides which way he is going to move, toward the good or the bad.

Similarly, in another hadith narrated by Ibn 'Umar, the Prophet, peace be upon him, says: "Truthfulness is a quality of the people of Paradise. When a servant is truthful he is also righteous, and if he is righteous he will believe and when he believes he will be admitted to Paradise. And falsehood is a characteristic of the people of Hell. When a servant tells a lie he commits a shameful deed which leads him to disbelieve and he who disbelieves shall be consigned to Hell."[165]

In the light of this we can explain such other ahadith as these: Sahl related from Sa'd that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "The treasures of good and evil are with Allah. Men are the keys to these treasures, and happy are those whom Allah has made keys to good and an obstruction to evil, and woe to those whom Allah makes instrumen-

[165] A sound hadith related by Ahmad, *Musnad*.

tal in promoting evil while obstructing the good." [166] Nasa'i and Al-Hakim relate from Shaddad that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If you are truthful to Allah, Allah will be truthful to you." [167]

Islam continuously exhorts Muslims to use their free will properly, for they can quite easily change their course of life by deciding sensibly which direction they want to follow, and it warns them at the same time to keep away from the path that leads to Hell. Both Paradise and Hell are near and well within man's reach.

Imam Ahmad relates from Ibn Numair and Waki'e and they both from Al-A'mash that the Prophet ,peace be upon him, said: "Paradise is nearer to you than your shoe laces and so also is Hell." [168]

This hadith shows that both good and evil are very near to us, which is why Allah urges us to hasten to do good: "Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for Paradise." [169] For the same reason, helplessness and frustration are condemned in the hadith. In a tradition narrated by Shaddad ibn Awf, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "A wise person is one who takes stock of his own actions critically and at the same time works righteous deeds for his life in the hereafter, while a helpless man is one who follows his heart's desires but cherishes vain hopes of Allah." [170] The Prophet, peace be upon him, commended to his companions examples of those who were prominent among them in this respect. 'Aisha relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, once said: "Whenever Ammar has to choose between two things, he always chooses the better of them." [171]

At the same time, the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not overlook those who undervalue the human freedom of choice and action and become frustrated and confused when asked to place their trust in Allah. Their negative attitude is incompatible with true faith in Allah and trust in His beneficence. An example of this we find in the following story, which Imam Ahmad has related from Awf ibn Malik.

He says: "Once the Prophet, peace be upon him, arbitrated between two men. The one who lost in the arbitration turned to go and said,

[166] A sound hadith, related by Al-Zahrani (Al-Kabir) and Al-Dhiya (Al-Jami' Al-Saghir).

[167] A sound hadith, *Al-Jami' Saghir.*

[168] Bukhari

[169] Qur'an 3:133

[170] A sound hadith, see Ahmad, *Musnad*, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and Al-Hakim (*Al-Jami' Saghir*).

[171] A sound hadith transmitted by Ibn Majah (*Al-Jami' Saghir*).

'Sufficient is Allah for me, and He is the Best Guardian.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: ''Bring that man back to me. 'What did you say?' asked the Prophet, peace be upon him. The man said: 'I said sufficient is Allah for me, and He is the Best Guardian.' Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Allah, dislikes people who become frustrated and lose hope. Therefore you should be discreet and act wisely, and if you feel helpless in the face of a problem then say: 'Sufficient is Allah for me, and He is the Best Guardian.''' [172]

The last two ahadith show that the Prophet, peace be upon him, not only urges man to shoulder his responsibility but requires every Muslim to use this blessing - the freedom of choice and action - properly and effectively to his own best advantage, as did Ammar, the companion of the Prophet, peace be upon him. He also warned against ignoring or belittling the importance of our freedom of action under any pretentious cover, such as pretending to surrender to the will of Allah while in fact we may only be frustrated and overcome by a sense of helplessness. This pretense may expose us to the anger of Allah.

True trust in Allah means to rely on Him and to respect and follow the laws He has laid down for His Creation, and to make use of all the resources that He has given us. The first and the foremost among these laws calls for man to exercise his responsibility to do his utmost to choose the best of what Allah has so benevolently and equitably put at his disposal.

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[172] See Abu Dawud and Nasa'i. Among its narrators is Baqiyyah ibn Walid, who is of questionable integrity, but the general purport of the tradition is supported by other texts of the Qur'an and hadith as well as by their general meaning.

Chapter Three

Preserving Human Freedom of Choice and Action

I. *Divine Facilitation (yusr or taysir)*

The most prominent aspect of human freedom, bestowed upon and guaranteed to man by his Creator, the Beneficent Allah, is *yusr* or *taysir*, that is, what we call Divine Facilitation. When a man chooses and decides upon a certain course then Allah supports or facilitates the pursuit of this course of action.

We should not confuse this kind of facilitation with the ease that forms the hallmark of all the Islamic laws, as in the Qur'anic verse, "Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties."[173] The ease spoken of in this verse is a mark of the Islamic way of life. The Divine Facilitation we shall now discuss refers to the support man needs to bear responsibility and accountability for all his actions. In this context we shall discuss man, his nature, and the characteristics of the freedom granted to Him by Allah that makes him eligible to bear responsibility.

This term is not new. We need only read the revealed texts to define it as a critical aspect of human freedom. The fact that others have ignored this term *yusr;* and have seldom ever used it does not in the least affect its importance. Some people tend to use it to denote compulsion and coercion, when in fact it is a necessary guarantee for the preservation of human freedom itself. Discussing various aspects of the problem may help us discover the depth of truth enshrined in the Qur'an and hadith.

Bukhari narrates from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him that he said: "We were with the Messenger of Allah at Baqi al-Gharqad while attending a funeral when he said: 'Each one of you has two seats prepared for him, one in Paradise and the other in Hell.' Those present said: 'Messenger of Allah, should not we leave every thing to Allah then?' He said: 'You should act, for everyone is helped in whatever he is destined to do.' Then he recited this Qur'anic verse:

> So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah) and (in all sincerity) testifies to the best, We will indeed make smooth for

[173] Qur'an: 2:185

> him the path to bliss. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself sufficient, and gives the lie to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery.[174]

In another version of this hadith, also from 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Bukhari relates that he said: "We were attending a funeral at Baqi al Gharqad when the Prophet, peace be upon him, came to us. He greeted us and sat down. We gathered around him. He had a small stick in his hand with which he started scratching in the ground. After a while he said: 'Everyone of you has a place ready to receive him and it is also inscribed whether a man is a wretch or a blessed one. A man said: 'Messenger of Allah, should we not then leave everything to fate and give up work, for whoever is predestined to be happy will act in such a way as will make him happy. If on the other hand, he is predestined to be miserable, he will act in such a way as will bring misery upon him.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'The blessed ones will be helped to do the deeds of the blessed ones, while the wretched will be helped to do the deeds of the wretched ones.' Then he recited this verse, 'So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah) and (in all sincerity) testifies to the best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to bliss,' to the end of the verse."

In another hadith Jabir ibn Abdullah said, "O Messenger of Allah, should we work for something which has already been determined or for something which has not been decided?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'For something which has already been determined.' Thereupon Suraqah said: 'Why should we work then?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered, 'Everyone is helped to do what he is destined for."[175]

The Qur'anic text to which all of these ahadith refer consists of the first ten verses of Surah al-Layl, which read as follows:

> By the night as it conceals (the light); by the day as it appears in glory; by (the mystery of) the creation of male and female: verily, (the ends) you strive for are diverse. So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah) and (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to bliss. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself sufficient, and gives the lie to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery. [176]

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[174] Bukhari, v.6,141.
[175] Muslim and Ibn Jarir, see *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, v.3, 647.
[176] Qur'an 92:1-10

The general context of these Qur'anic verses is the same as the general context of surahs Al-Insan, Al-Balad, and Al-Shams described at the beginning of Part III above. But they also add a new dimension to this common general context. We are dealing here with the phenomenon of Divine Facilitation.

The term *yusr* (facilitation) is derived from the divine words: "We will indeed make smooth for him the path to bliss," and "We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery." The fact that this term is also found at some other places in the Qur'an gives it continuity. For example, Surah 'Abasa reads, "Then does He make His path smooth for him,"[177] and Surah Al-A'la reads: "And We will make it easy for you (to follow) the simple (path)."[178] The word is also used in ahadith, for example in the Prophet's words: "Everyone is helped to do what he is destined for."

The Qur'anic verses provide such a clear definition of the word *yusr* (facilitation) that there can be little doubt about its real significance and meaning. These verses also show that people vary in inclination and in the choice of their course of action in life, as shown by the oath, "By the night as it conceals (the light); by the day as it appears in glory; by the (the mystery of) the creation of male and female; verily, (the ends) you strive for are diverse." The divine words, "Verily, (the ends) you strive for are diverse," is tangible proof of man's independence. It is further borne out by the disparities found in the ways and attitudes of men, and in some cases in the same person's varying attitude and behavior. This diversity and disparity in itself constitutes proof of the freedom of choice and action enjoyed by man.

The two subsequent verses refer to *yusr*: "So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), and (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss. But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient, and gives the lie to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery." The previous verses mention in brief that men differ and so do their attitudes and courses of action and behavior in life. The two subsequent verses thereafter serve to elucidate this point, the first one explaining that when man chooses to follow the path of righteousness he shall not only be free to do so but shall have his path to bliss made

[177] Qur'an 80:20
[178] Qur'an 87:8

smooth and easy for him: "So he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), and (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to Bliss."

The second of the two subsequent verses elaborates on the point that the same rule that is true of virtue holds good for evil. If a man decides to follow evil he will also find his way smooth and easy: "But he who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient, and gives the lie to the Best, We will indeed make smooth for him the path to misery."

The words, "he who gives (in charity) and fears (Allah), and (in all sincerity) testifies to the Best," include all kinds and levels of good. Giving in charity, fear of Allah, and testifying to the Best are inclusive terms, since good in itself has many forms and grades. Similarly the words, "He who is a greedy miser and thinks himself self-sufficient and gives the lie to the Best," refer to all and various forms and levels of evil. This explanation agrees with the sense of the word, *shatta* (meaning "various"), as used in the verse, "Verily, (the ends) you strive for are varied," and is further borne out and justified by the disparities and diversities in attitudes and behavior of men occasioned by the existence of their freedom of choice and action.

These first ten verses of Surah al Layl adequately express man's freedom to choose and follow any path he may like. The blessing of freedom granted to man is not an illusion. It involves punishment and reward. The principle of facilitation comes in here as a new safeguard because it affirms the wisdom of the trials ordained by Allah in human life. Recompense, whether Paradise or Hell, is bound to follow the deeds of a person, for "man can have nothing but what he strives for; and the (fruit of) his striving will soon come in sight; then he will be rewarded with a reward complete."[179] It was therefore necessary to fortify human freedom by this protective wall in order to ensure its sublimity and to enable man to shoulder the burden of responsibility in a just and equitable manner. "Our lord: You have not created (all) this without purpose, glory to You. Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire."[180]

What then is the essence of this facilitation in real life? If one considers how we embark upon a good or an evil course in life, we can easily understand and appreciate this blessing of facilitation. Both

[179] Qur'an 53:39-41
[180] Qur'an 3:191

good men and the evil men find themselves free to pursue their goals without any outside obstruction. Thus, for instance, at the time of prayers some wend their way to the mosques, and find no difficulty in doing so. They make ablutions and get ready for prayers and are helped by Allah in all this by placing at their disposal all the necessary means therefor. When at last they get together and stand in prayers, kneeling, bowing, and prostrating themselves in humiliation before their Lord, calling upon Him to help and support them, their hearts are at rest and full of confidence in His promises. Then they leave the mosques in peace and with grateful hearts, just when there are many others who refuse to respond to the Divine Call and choose to go to other places of questionable repute. They too find it quite easy to follow their course of life because they too are given freedom by their Creator, and their way is made smooth for them. They misuse the blessing of Allah and indulge in debauchery and wickedness. They use the freedom of action to gratify their sinful desires. This is why it is said that nobody can be obedient or rebellious without using or abusing a blessing of Allah, the Exalted. This is the simplest example of how the principle of facilitation operates for both the good and evil alike.

This represents, however, only the beginning phase of facilitation, which precedes the more effective forms of help that come when good people become firmer in their conviction and commitment to the cause of truth. Similarly, evil-minded people become more enthused in sin as they become more attached to their evil ways and are further engrossed in their vain pleasures.

Before we proceed to discuss these two phenomena of *taysir* or facilitation and *istidraj* or driving a person or a group to final punishment, we should be aware of a false use of the term "facilitation" which contradicts its real meaning as found in the Islamic texts. It is strange that there should still be some doubts in the minds of Muslims regarding the real significance and meaning of the word despite its clear explanation by the Messenger of Allah himself. The fact that the term he used is derived from the word *taysir* (facilitation) removes any doubt or confusion in its meaning.

At a most suitable place and time for admonition and contemplation, when the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions attended the above mentioned funeral at Baqi Al-Gharqad, he admonished them: "Work, for everybody will be helped to do the kind of work for which he is created." The two verses that the Prophet

invoked in evidence explain clearly what he meant by these words. The Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered them to work righteousness, for through facilitation (*taysir*) their way would be made easy and smooth for them. They should therefore guard against procrastination and indolence and not be complacent, thinking that since everything is predestined they need not work or act at all. This is a false argument, which is why the Prophet, peace be upon him, invoked the verses we have just analysed from the Qur'an as evidence to explain the point further and to show that facilitation (*taysir*) corresponds to whatever choice man makes in life by his own free will.

Man's responsibility is to use his power of choice properly and work hard, for whichever way he chooses he will find himself free to follow it. In fact he will find all the requisite potential and ability to pursue his desired goal, which is precisely why man is solely accountable and responsible for his deeds and actions.

Other ahadith serve to explain the following sentence of the Prophet, peace be upon him, "Every one of you has his place either in Paradise or in Hell predestined for him." This means that every man has two places, one in Paradise and the other in Hell, reserved for him. On this point an authentic (*sahih*) hadith as recorded by Imam Ahmad says: "Everyone in Paradise shall see his place in Hell and say, 'If Allah had not guided me (I could not have entered Paradise),' and he shall be all the more grateful to Allah. (Similarly) everyone in Hell shall see his place in Paradise and cry out, 'O would that Allah had guided me to it,' and it shall be a sorrow and remorse for him."

Both Bukhari and Muslim relate from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "No Muslim whose three children died will go to the Fire except for Allah's oath (i.e., everyone has to pass over the bridge above the Lake of Fire)." Ibn Kathir has quoted this hadith while commenting on the verse: "Not one of you but will pass over it; this is, with your Lord, a decree which must be accomplished. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong-doers therein, (humbled) to their knees."[181] The beginning of the hadith shows that the Prophet, peace be upon him, wanted to admonish and exhort his companions to work hard and do their best to secure for themselves a place in Paradise and to avoid the

[181] Qur'an 19:71-72

punishment of the Fire. We may refer here to only one of these ahadith as mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his commentary on Allah's words: "Not one of you but will pass over it." (19:71). Imam Ahmad relates from Abu Samiya that he said, "We disagreed about the meaning of 'passing over' Hell. Some said 'A true believer will not enter it.' Others said, 'All of them will enter Hell, and then Allah shall save those who feared Him.' Later when I met Jabir ibn Abdullah and told him about our disagreement, he said; 'All of them will enter it,' and then he put his finger on his ear and said 'Just a minute, I think I heard the Messenger of Allah say: "The faithful and the sinners shall all enter it, but it shall become cool and safe for the believers as it did for Ibrahim, so much so that Hell shall cry out because of their coolness. Then Allah shall save those who feared Him and leave the wrong-doers therein on their knees."

This leaves no room for any doubt about the fact that the real emphasis in the hadith about facilitation (*taysir*) is on exhorting man to work hard and to do his best.

Although the matter is clearly explained by both the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, many Muslims still continue to use the hadith about the Prophet's admonishment at the Baqi al Gharqad funeral but ignore its opening word completely. They omit the word "work" from the phrase "work, for everyone will be helped in things he is destined to do," and so draw a conclusion entirely opposite to its meaning. They do not take it as an exhortation to action but rather consider it as proving the opposite, i.e., the futility of all action, which leads to despair and loss of hope. This misconception probably arose from the rather difficult and complicated question whether man is really free to choose his own course in life rather than follow a predetermined pattern of behavior.

The Arabic word *muyassar* (meaning facilitated or made easy) being composed of similar letters, was confused with another, namely, *musayyar* (meaning remote-controlled or guided) by the common people, which led to the present confusion. The word *musayyar* indicates coercion, compulsion, and complete lack of free will, whereas the word *taysir* in the context used by the Prophet, peace be upon him, carries a diametrically opposite meaning. Facilitation in this prophetic context provides a further incentive for man to do his best, not to diminish the importance of action.

Another reason why this doubt persists may lie in the inability of people to understand the subtle difference between Allah's personal

attributes and acts and those of His creatures. Therefore when a believer submits himself as a necessary condition of his creed and professes his belief that whatever happens is predetermined and predestined, he tends to confuse the eternal Will of Allah with the created wills of His creatures and seeks to resolve the problem thus created by abandoning his own responsibility. We shall, insha'Allah, deal with this problem in a separate chapter.

II. *Advanced Facilitation and Istidraj*

The phenomenon of facilitation serves as a unifying term to connect the two ends of free choice: good and evil. When it is no longer a question of choice between one of these two ways, however, and a person actually embarks upon the way of his choice so it becomes a fixed tendency or a regular habit, then the term *taysir* or facilitation takes on a different significance. It is subdivided into two separate terms. When a person chooses the path of virtue and patiently perseveres in it, facilitation usually takes him into a new phase where his wise choice finds Divine Support and help. When this facilitation exceeds the normal limits and material laws, we replace it with the term *ma'una* or help. It is so called because it actually helps a servant of Allah to obey Him and makes him feel that he is in Allah's loving care: "And those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to Our paths."[182]

If on the other hand a servant chooses an evil course in life, misusing his freedom, and persists in it, then the phenomenon of facilitation takes on a rather terrible form, against which we should always seek Allah's refuge. It is termed *istidraj* or driving someone to destruction gradually, by degrees or little by little. *Istidraj* on the path of evil is comparable to *ma'una* or divine help found by the virtuous in pursuit of righteousness.

Both these terms are unusual and carry a preternatural connotation, but they are clear and well defined. As a matter of fact, as manifestations of facilitation, they are originally one and the same thing, and only at a later stage do they emerge as *ma'una* or help and *istidraj* or gradually drawing someone nearer to destruction. It may be compared to an embryo that slowly and gradually grows and evolves into a full grown healthy baby. This is how divine help comes to a person who

[182]Qur'an 29:69

chooses to follow the path of righteousness. But if the embryo is deformed and diseased, its deformity will increase as it grows older. This is precisely how a person with evil inclinations is gradually overtaken by his punishment: "From the land that is clean and good, by the will of its Cherisher, springs up produce, (rich) after its kind; but from the land that is bad, springs up nothing but that which is niggardly. Thus do We explain the signs by various (symbols) to those who are grateful."[183] "This is because they followed that which called forth the wrath of Allah, and they hated Allah's good pleasure; so He made their deeds of no effect."[184]

In the material world, no rigid lines of demarcation exist between different phases of development. Nobody except Allah knows for sure when an embryo is actually imbued with life. Likewise it is difficult to tell when facilitation actually takes on the form of divine help or emerges as *istidraj*, gradually drawing a sinner to his final doom.

This explains why the Qur'an speaks of these things in general terms. Thus, for example, the Qur'an teaches us to pray to Allah for help in a general way without specifying its actual nature or saying how it should come to us, whether in the form of facilitating our way or helping us or aiding us through any other miraculous sense of the term. In Surah Al-Fatiha, which we recite in every prayer, we entreat Allah in the words: "You alone do we worship, and Your help we seek."[185]

The Qur'an also explains the means whereby we may seek divine help as in these verses: "And seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer."[186]

"O you who believe! seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer."[187]

Concentration on patience and prayer as the means of divine help makes it dependant on human deeds, and reinforces a person's confidence in his wise choice. Regarding prayers, Allah says: "Surely, prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds."[188]

Patience is the familiar and constant basis of all worship and virtue. Thus fasting, which is a physical and spiritual training, enables man

[183] Qur'an 7:58
[184] Qur'an 47:28
[185] Qur'an 1:5
[186] Qur'an 2:45
[187] Qur'an 2:153
[188] Qur'an 29:45

to follow the path of righteousness steadfastly and manifests in part the same essential quality of patient perseverance. Likewise other virtues of a higher quality like *jihad*, facing affliction with fortitude, avoiding lusts and what is prohibited, all these are different facets of the same moral quality—patience. Thus the door to divine help is wide and open for Allah's patient servants. And true indeed are the words of Allah, the Exalted: "Patience is most fitting, and it is Allah (alone) Whose help can be sought."[189]

Similarly, the Qur'an mentions *istidraj* without specifying if it is an extraordinary and unusual phenomenon or not, which means that it may or may not be always so. Says Allah: "Those who reject Our signs, We shall gradually visit with punishment, in ways they perceive not; respite will I grant to them: for My scheme is strong (and unfailing)."[190] Ibn Kathir says: "This means that Allah gives them affluence and prosperity in the world so that they are deluded and led to believe they are in the right. In our opinion most things in life are not preternatural."

Up to a point, Allah always helps. Says Allah: "Whoever goes astray, (Allah) Most Gracious extends (the rope) to him."[191] But what hope is there after this point? Both Bukhari and Muslim relate from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Allah gives respite to a wrongdoer, but once He seizes him, He will never let him off," and then he read this verse: "Such is the chastisement of your Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed, and severe is His punishment."[192]

To sum up, the phenomenon of *taysir* or facilitation, upon which both the Qur'an and *sunnah* lay such emphasis, forms a very important aspect of human freedom of choice, because it secures further guarantees for this freedom, making man's way smooth and easy, whichever path he should choose to go.

Thereafter comes the stage of total commitment to good or evil. This is the stage of "take off." Man moves forward with great zest and force of his own free volition either in the direction of the good or on the path to disaster. In the one case, man is helped and supported by Allah, whereas in the other he is encouraged to keep on his chosen course until he meets his doom. But in both the cases, whether one

[189] Qur'an 12:18
[190] Qur'an 7:182-183
[191] Qur'an 19:75
[192] Qur'an 11:12

receives divine help or is gradually drawn to his final punishment, it is man himself who makes his choice and decides which way he is going to follow. Thereafter he is either helped along the course of his choice or simply encouraged and drawn on towards his final doom. The use of two separate terms to describe divine facilitation serves to distinguish the consequences of good deeds from those of the evil ones, for the first are a means of winning Allah's pleasure whereas the latter call for Allah's wrath and chastisement.

PART FOUR

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY, THE ETERNAL WILL OF ALLAH, AND THE WILLS OF HIS CREATURES

Chapter One

Divine Providence and Its Effects on Man's Free Will
I. The Divine Will: Qur'anic Verses and Ahadith
II. Man's Will: Qur'anic Verses and Ahadith
III. The Two Wills Juxtaposed
IV. The Conclusive Rule

Chapter Two

Fate as an Excuse to Avoid Responsibility
I. Turning the Argument on Its Head
II. The Four Possible Relationships Between Divine Providence and Human Freedom

Chapter Three

Divine Providence and the Last Acts of Man

Chapter Four

The Meaning of *Mash'ia* (Will)
I. The Two Basic Uses of the Word "Will" in the Qur'an
II. Perspectives on Good and Evil as the Will of Allah
III. Qur'anic Distinctions Between the Two Wills

Chapter Five

Prohibition of Discussing Predestination
I. Sources of the Prohibition
II. Principles of Prohibition
III. Pondering the Signs of Allah

Chapter One

Divine Providence and its Effect on Man's Free Will

As we have shown above in several contexts, both the Qur'an and the *sunnah* lay great emphasis on man 's independence and free will. Lest it be thought that we are advocating human freedom against the Supreme Divine Will, we ask Allah, the Exalted, to preserve us against such a thing. For if we were to do so, we would ruin ourselves, and destroy human freedom itself by cutting it off from its Originator and Bestower. How could man continue to enjoy the blessing of free will if it is separated from its origin, base, and extension?

The conscious understanding and awareness of human freedom and our emphasis on it are in themselves, first and foremost, an affirmation and awareness of Allah's will. Is not man's endowment of free will a Creation of Allah like the rest of His Creation? Most certainly! Inevitably therefore the Supreme Divine Will must control and guide it as part of the whole of creation. How could it be otherwise?

The controversy between the determinists and the advocates of free will, and the well known question whether man is free or subject to a predetermined fate, represent a false controversy, for they treat the Divine Will as a rival to the wills of His creatures. This is uncalled for and altogether without justification. How can the infinite and eternal Knowledge of Allah be compared with the knowledge of His creatures or His Power and Providence be matched against man's limited power and free will?

The entire fabric of belief recognized by the Muslim community rests on one Divine Sentence: "There is nothing whatever like Him, and He is the One who hears and sees (all things)." [193] From this is derived the well-known rule: "Whatever comes into your mind (about Allah) He is different from it." The attributes of the Supreme Lord are like His Person, that is, there are no attributes comparable to these just as there is no god besides Him?

When we begin with the Supreme Being and His attributes and look at the signs of His providence in creation we appreciate the startling difference between the Will of the Creator and the wills of the created.

[193] Qur'an 26:11

We approach the subject through the signs of Allah, which we can examine and study. The action of the Divine Will is not like that of created wills. Therefore it would be wrong to assume that whenever man wants to exercise his free will, Allah's Will always blocks his way, frustrates his efforts, and renders him without any real will or power of his own.

Such a concept is barren, betrays a superficial knowledge of the Eternal Attributes of Allah, and is born out of ignorance of their nature. The actions of Allah are free from all the weaknesses found in the interactions between two created wills.

What then is the role of the Divine Will vis-a-vis human freedom, especially free choice and free will? To answer this question we shall consider the Qur'anic texts that deal specifically with: 1) the Divine Will, 2) man's will, and 3) the two wills together. These are the texts, along with the *sunnah* of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that lay down the basic principles and help clarify various details of both the wills and of the interaction between the Divine and the human.

We shall confine ourselves to the Qur'anic texts and hadith that deal with concrete matters, instead of with the unseen, so that we may explain the abstract or allegorical through the concrete signs of Divine Providence that can be seen and felt. After discussing the abstract through the material works and signs of Allah, we shall take up the supposed prohibition of hair-splitting over fate and providence and explain the relevant Islamic guidance.

I. *The Divine Will: Qur'anic Verses and Hadith*

Six verses serve well to clarify the core elements of Islamic belief in the overall supervision and control of man by Divine Providence and its impact on man's success or failure in finding true guidance:

> 1) As to those who reject faith, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).[194]
>
> 2) If any one's trial is intended by Allah you can in no way prevail with Allah in his behalf. For such persons it is not Allah's will to purify their hearts. For them there is disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment in the Hereafter.[195]

[194] Qur'an 2:6-7
[195] Qur'an 5:41

3) Of them there are some who (pretend to) listen to you; but We have thrown veils over their hearts, so they do not understand, and put deafness in their ears, and even if they were to see every one of the signs (of the truth), they would not believe in it, so much so that when they come to you in order to dispute with you, those who are determined to deny the truth say: "These are nothing but tales of the ancients."[196]

4) The breasts of those whom Allah (in His plan) wills to guide, He opens to Islam; the brests of those whom He wills to leave straying, He makes close and constricted, as if they had to climb up to the skies. Thus does Allah (heap) the penalty on those who refuse to believe.[197]

5) It is true you will not be able to guide every one whom you love; but Allah guides those whom He will. And He knows best those who receive guidance.[198]

6) Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good, (equal to one who is rightly guided)? For Allah leaves to stray whom He Will and guides whom He Wills. So let not your soul go out in (vainly) sighing after them: for Allah knows well all that they do![199]

These verses and many others like them in the Qur'an convince us at a glance that Divine Providence plays a very basic role in human guidance. Further consideration will add new meanings and develop a fuller understanding of the subject. These texts fully explain the true Islamic belief respecting the Divine Will with miraculous clarity, just as they elucidate the remaining aspects manifest in other verses regarding the human will and the interaction of the two, the Divine and the human.

The first verse, from al-Baqarah, shows that it is man who takes the initiative and follows the path of disbelief, because the tense used here refers to an event of the past: "As to those who reject faith, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them: they will not believe." Hence they are punished for the persistent disbelief that renders them impervious to the warnings of the Prophet, peace be upon him. This verse also holds a message of consolation for the

[196] Qur'an 6:25
[197] Qur'an 6:125
[198] Qur'an 28:56
[199] Qur'an 35:8

Prophet, peace be upon him, and expresses the Divine Compassion for him.

This conclusion is supported by a tradition reported by 'Ali ibn Abi Talha from Ibn Talha and he from Ibn Abbas that he said: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, was very eager for all the people to believe and follow the Divine Guidance. So Allah told him that none shall believe except those who are decreed as the happy ones in the first book, nor shall anyone go astray but those who are decreed as the unlucky ones in the first book.[200] After mentioning some other traditions besides this one Ibn Kathir says: "The report related from Ibn Abbas in the tradition of 'Ali ibn Abi Talha is clearer and explains other similar verses."

Regarding the sealing of their hearts and ears as a recompense for their disbelief and their consequent inability to benefit from the warning, Al-Qurtabi says: "The Muslim Ummah unanimously holds that setting a seal upon the hearts of the disbelievers as a recompense for their disbelief has been described as an act of Allah Himself, for He says: 'Nay, but Allah has set a seal upon their hearts for their disbelief.'" This consensus of opinion as recorded by Al-Qurtabi[201] means that the basic or main impression left on the soul by Providence does not, in the light of this verse, prevent the Ummah from considering the specific aspects of human freedom about which there is consensus of opinion.

In a sound hadith as reported by Al-Qurtabi and Ibn Kathir from Hudhaifa, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Temptation reaches a man 's heart like straws of a mattress that join one by one, so if a heart is affected by it a black spot appears on it, and if it remains unaffected it is marked with a white mark, until they (the black or the white spots) cover each of the two hearts, making the white one like a rock which cannot be harmed by any evil so long as the heavens and the earth continue to exist and leaving the other one black and marred like an overturned earthen pot neither accepting good nor avoiding evil."[202]

Ibn Jarir said: "The truth in this regard in my eyes is that which is supported and approved by its precedents. It is related from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "When a believer

[200] *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, Surah Al-Baqarah, the early part.
[201] *Tafsir Al-Qurtabi*, and others: Surah Al-Baqarah, the early part.
[202] *Al-Muwatta* (Malik), *Musnad* (Ahmad), Muslim and Al-Tirmidhi.

sins, a black spot appears on his heart. Then if he repents and avoids it and asks for forgiveness and the favor (of Allah) his heart shall be cleansed and polished, but if he transgresses until his heart is affected by it then that is the "stain of the (ill) which they do!"' [203] Ibn Jarir goes on to say that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that when sins continually affect the heart they cause it to be closed in, and this is the time when a seal is set upon it from Allah after which faith cannot enter it nor can disbelief leave it. This is the seal mentioned in these words of Allah: "Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their ears."

All Qur'anic texts of a similar kind may be explained by this exegetical method. We shall follow it in the explanation of the second and third verses quoted above, namely, number 41 of Surah Al-Ma'ida, and number 25 of Surah Al-An'am. The other three texts are similar to these two and may be explained similarly through analogy.

The second verse, from Al Ma'ida, reads: "If anyone's trial is intended by Allah, you can in no way prevail with Allah in his behalf. For such persons it is not Allah's will to purify their hearts ..." This is part of a longer verse. In the beginning of the verse we find that the manifestation of the effect of Divine will does not preclude mention in the text of the behavior of man and the punishment that it brings because of his misdeeds and corruption.

The verse opens with the words: "O Messenger! let not those grieve thee, who race each other into unbelief." This underlines two important facts: First, The Unbelievers greatly transgressed and persisted in their misdeeds, which caused the Prophet, peace be upon him, much pain and suffering, so he was consoled through Revelation and told not to be hard on himself by grieving over them. Second, it describes the Unbelievers as racing each other into unbelief. The words "who race each other into unbelief" tell us how they are rushing towards unbelief and going farther and farther away from belief. This rushing away from belief and their transgression mentioned above is clearly the result of their own free choice. It lay well within their power. They made a wrong choice deliberately and persisted in the wrong.

The later part of this long verse injects a new element into the crimes

[203] This hadith has also been narrated by Tirmidhi and Nasa'i from Qutaiba, and Al-Laith ibn Sa'd, and Ibn Majah from Hisham ibn Ammar who heard it from Hatim ibn Ismail and Al-Walid ibn Muslim, all three of them relating it from Muhammad ibn Ajlan in these words. Tirmidhi says it is a sound hadith.

of these people racing each other into unbelief. One group were those "who say, we believe,' with their lips but whose hearts have no faith." These were the people who raced each other into unbelief covertly while professing overt belief to deceive the believers. This kind of behavior shows a perverse mind and a dangerous conduct. Thereafter the verse describes another party of these people who besides "racing into unbelief" are also guilty of many evil practices, namely, "from among the Jews, men who will listen to any lie, even to others who have never so much as come to you. They change the words from their places, and say: 'If you are given this take it, but if you are not given this then beware!'" These people have five evil qualities: falsehood, conspiracy with the enemy, distortion of the word of Allah with evil designs, following their lusts instead of the Revelation, and persistence in these evils out of arrogance and animosity toward the truth.

The next verse describes these very people as being (fond of) listening to falsehood and of devouring anything forbidden. Both of these evil characteristics, listening to falsehood and devouring anything forbidden are described in terms that suggest intensity and persistence in these evils. Hence the just and fair requital for what they themselves earned or "forwarded to heaven" for their souls. They chose and actively pursued and followed unbelief, error, and evil, and so they met their inevitable fate when in the end love of evil completely overwhelmed them: "If any one's trial is intended by Allah, you can in no way prevail with Allah in his behalf." This was the harvest they had prepared for themselves with their own hands by persisting in falsehood and pursuing evil until they became hardened and cherished their evils. The statement of the Qur'an (5:41) "Allah does not want to purify their hearts," underlines a punishment that suits their crime and forms a fitting recompense for their corrupt hearts and degenerate minds, for they said "we believe" with their lips but their hearts had no faith. They willingly and consciously preferred the filth of disbelief, jealousy, lusts, and deceit to purity and cleanliness of faith, truth, and Islam.

In short this verse in a miraculous way presents a general statement respecting the absolute belief in the Divine Will without touching any other main point concerning the human will or the interaction with the Divine. The Divine Will has absolute control over all things; it shapes the conduct of man and his free will just as it makes a date-kernel or a colocynth-seed sprout and grow. Both of these yield their fruit with the permission of Allah, and its sweetness or bitterness is entirely

dependent upon Divine Providence. This does not, however, negate the importance of the human effort that goes into sowing the seeds and looking after the harvest until it is ready to be reaped. True indeed is the saying "seek and you shall find, and as you sow, so shall you reap."

Life, justice, and wisdom abhor any confusion or breakdown in the order and discipline of nature, such as may cause a date-palm tree to yield bitter fruits like those of colocynth tree or make a colocynth tree bear fruits sweet like honey.

> And whoever purifies himself does so for the benefit of his own soul; and the destination (of all) is to Allah. The blind and the seeing are not alike; nor are the (chilly) shade and the (genial) heat of the sun: nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead. Allah can make any that He wills to hear; but you cannot make those to hear who are (buried) in graves. You are no other than a warner. Verily we have sent you in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner; and there never was a people without a warner having lived among them (in the past). And if they reject you, so did their predecessors, to whom came their messengers with clear signs, Scriptures, and the Book of enlightenment. In the end I punished those who rejected faith: and how (terrible) was My rejection (of them)! Do you not see that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colors. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, and of various shades of color, and pitch black. And so among men and crawling creatures and cattle are those of various colors. Those truly fear Allah among His servants who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving.[204]

The third verse quoted above, from Surah Al-An'am, reads:

> Of them are some who (pretend to) listen to you; but We have thrown veils over their hearts, so they do not understand, and put deafness in their ears and even if they were to see every one of the signs (of truth), they would not believe in it, so much so that when they come to you in order to dispute with you, those who are determined to deny the truth say: "These are nothing but tales of the ancients."[205]

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[204] Qur'an 35:18-28
[205] Qur'an 6:25

The real significance of this verse lies in its context. It is preceded by the verse: "Those to whom We have given the Scripture recognize this as they recognize their own sons. Those who destroy themselves will not believe. And who does more wrong than he who invents a lie against Allah or rejects His signs? Verily the wrongdoers shall never be successful."[206] And at the end of this group of verses we find the verse: "Others they keep away from it, and themselves they keep away, but they only destroy their own souls, and they perceive it not."[207]

Thus in the contextual background of these verses we can clearly discern that as far as these people were concerned:

1) They recognized the Qur'an as they recognized their own sons but still rejected it out of arrogance and jealousy;
2) They forged lies against Allah and were of the wrongdoers;
3) They recognized the Qur'an in the light of the teachings in the Old Scriptures, and by hearing it from the Prophet, peace be upon him, and still refused to believe;
4) Various signs and arguments had no effect on them, and even if they were to see all the signs they would still refuse to believe; and
5) They not only refused to believe themselves but prevented others from doing so.

Hence they received a recompense and punishment similar to these five actions of theirs. Their punishment mirrors their moral depravity and is a natural consequence of their evil conduct, in accordance with the general rule concerning Allah's will vis-a-vis His creatures, namely, that the recompense they receive is but one of the evolutionary phases in their struggle for their cherished goals, for which they employed every conceivable trick, deceit, and cunning. True indeed are the words of Allah: "But they plot not except against their own souls, but they perceive it not."[208]

II. *Man's Will: The Qur'anic Verses & Hadith*

The general context of the Qur'anic verses on the human will emphasizes the human freedom to choose between the two paths of good and evil and explains their respective signs and consequences. Which of the two ways a man might or might not follow is left to his

[206] Qur'an 6:20-21
[207] Qur'an 6:26
[208] Qur'an 6:123

own free choice and initiative. The style used here normally carries both a promise and a warning. The warning rejects any claim that whatever men chooses is right and lawful for him, that is, it rejects the notion that doing a thing and not doing it are one and the same in nature and consequences. It does not negate the fact, however, that man is by nature capable of exercising his freedom of choice in life.

We give below some verses without any comments or explanation, for the remarks and the explanation given on the previous group of verses under section I above on the Divine Will are sufficient to explain the following verses, which underline some aspects of human freedom while speaking of the Will of Allah. The ahadith, traditions, and opinions of the commentators quoted above also serve to explain the essential theme of the following verses:

> 1) And recite (and teach) what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord: no one can change His words, and none will you find as a refuge other than Him. And keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face; and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this life, nor obey any whose heart We Permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us, one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds. Say: "The Truth is from your Lord." Let him who will, believe, and let him, who will, reject (it); for the wrongdoers We have prepared a Fire whose (smoke and flames), like the walls and roof of a tent, will hem them in.[209]

In analyzing this Qur'anic quote on the human will, we should consider four points: 1) the warning, "and keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord," commands us to keep good company and to keep away from bad companions. This effect of bad company and the impressionability of man merely underlines his ability and duty to exercise his free will. This is why we have been commanded to do or avoid certain things; 2) the Divine words "nor obey any whose heart We permitted to neglect the remembrance of Us," manifest the working of the Divine Will; 3) the words, "one who follows his own desires, whose case has gone beyond all bounds," emphasize human freedom; and 4) The words "let him who will, believe and let him who will, reject (it)," also focus on human freedom

[209]Qur'an 18:27-29

and its practical expression. Furthermore they positively affirm man's freedom of choice and exhort him to bear his responsibility rather than reject it or run away from it.

> 2) Then how shall you, if you deny (Allah) guard yourselves against a day that will make children hoary headed, whereon the sky will be cleft asunder? His promise must be accomplished. Verily, this is an admonition: therefore, who so will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord.[210]
>
> 3) (This is) a warning to mankind, to any of you who chooses to press forward, or to follow behind; every soul will be held in pledge for its deeds.[211]
>
> 4) Nay, this surely is an admonition: let any who will, keep it in remembrance![212]
>
> 5) That day will be the sure reality: therefore, whoso will, let him take a (straight) return to his Lord![213]

These five verses portray every person's freedom to choose the path he or she wants to follow. It is quite easy to to see that these verses, like those referred to previously, do not preclude the presence of human freedom within the broader framework of truth. This framework has its own specific characteristics, the most basic of which is that it is of necessity subject and subservient to the Will of Allah, the Exalted. It is His Will alone that has endowed the human will with these powers, and given man such faculties and freedom of choice as make him a responsible being, fully capable of bearing the burden of the responsibilities imposed upon him by the universal and eternal *din*.

The Qur'an reinforces this teaching on human freedom by the way it warns sinners and disbelievers against the misuse of their freedom of action, under the penalty that it would be taken away from them unless they mend their ways, so that they would never be able to find guidance: "And if it had been Our Will, We would surely have destroyed their eyes, so that they would struggle for the path: how then would they see?"[214] Commenting on this verse, Ibn Abbas says: "This means if We had left them to stray away from the guidance, they would not find guidance."

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[210] Qur'an 73:17-19
[211] Qur'an 74:36-38
[212] Qur'an 74:54-55
[213] Qur'an 78:39
[214] Qur'an 36:66

Allah also warns: "And if it had been Our Will, We could have transformed them in their places. Then they should have been unable to move about, nor could they have turned back."[215] Explaining this verse Al-Hassan Al-Basri and Qatadah said: "It means they would have been left standing in their places. That is why Allah used the words, 'They should have been unable to move,' that is, go forward, 'nor could they have turned back.' They would have remained instead in one state permanently, neither being able to go forward nor in a position to turn back.

What message do we get when we compare the above two verses of warning with the actual blessing by virtue of which they continue to use their freedom of choice and action? The first verse warns the disbelievers that unless they reform their ways their ability and freedom of choice will be completely taken away, and the second threatens to incapacitate them physically and render them unable to control their volition and behavior.

The message points unmistakably to the importance of human freedom and the need to use it in accord with the Revelation from Allah.

III. *The Two Wills Juxtaposed*

The group of verses quoted in this section III portrays two aspects of Divine Providence respecting the actions of men. One of these is hypothetical and underlines a possibility while the other aspect is actual and operative. The two aspects are mentioned in most cases with such attributes of Allah as elucidate the wisdom behind them as well as guide the people to the correct creed, teaching them to refer all affairs to the Supreme Will of Allah, the Exalted.

Whereas the first group of verses in section I, has depicted the role of Divine Providence and the second group, in section II, dealt with human freedom, the third group provides us with a unique framework to study in detail the role of the two wills interacting together. We quote below nine verses in this group:

> 1) If Allah had so Willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other after clear (signs) had come to them, ***but*** they chose to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting. If Allah had so Willed, they would not have fought each other; ***but*** Allah fulfills His plan.[216]

[215] Qur'an 36:67
[216] Qur'an 2:253

This verse presents four aspects of Divine Providence, two of them before the particle of emendation (*lakin* or "but") and two after it. The two that precede the "but" are hypothetical and underscore a possibility, whereas the two after the "but" are actual and operative.

The first, hypothetical stance is described in the words: "If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other." Divine Providence is found here, as it were, in a state of abeyance respecting the prevention of fighting among men. It does unequivocally show, however, that Allah had full power to check the fighting, but He chose not to interfere. Hence the fighting among succeeding generations.

The particle of emendation (*lakin* or "but") introduces the second stance, the actual and operative aspect of Divine Providence. The fact that Allah did not prevent people from fighting with each other signifies the freedom of action that Allah has bestowed upon men and which includes the freedom to disagree. This in turn creates a situation wherein the conflict between truth and falsehood ensues, leading some men to believe and attain to the heights of faith, while others refuse to believe and continue to grope in the darkness of disbelief. "But they chose to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting."

As to the third and the fourth aspects, in the second sentence, we find they both not only underscore what we have already seen in the case of the first two aspects, but add a very important dimension to it. When we read in the first sentence what is said after the first particle of emendation (*lakin*) together with what is mentioned in the second sentence after the second particle (*lakin*), we find a direct textual testimony to the effect that Allah has indeed granted man full freedom so far as believing or not believing is concerned. Thus in the first example we read: "But They chose to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting," and in the second instance we are told: "But Allah fulfills His plan."

In a sense the two sentences are about one and the same thing but from two different standpoints. To be more precise we may say that these two sentences provide us with a meticulously perfect perspective to understand the workings of the two wills together. It explains distinctly but in easy terms that the Divine Will is supreme; it orders and controls everything; it can neither be put in abeyance nor is it ever powerless to prevent men from fighting and wrangling among themselves. In fact it did allow this to happen for a higher purpose and wisdom, shaping man's nature and arranging human life so that man

should have full freedom to think for himself, to choose freely from among diverse viewpoints, and to have the moral courage, if need be, to stand up for his beliefs and be ready even to fight for them. Thus while man enjoys freedom of choice and action without any interference from outside, it is also a fact that the Divine Will alone is supreme and in control of all things.

The Qur'an has elucidated this balanced approach in a single sentence propounding the same problem from two different standpoints: 1) the freedom of man and the area of his freedom: "but they (chose) to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting"; and 2) the Will of the Creator and the way chosen for man and his life: "But Allah fulfills His plan." Since the two aspects are but two sides of one and the same problem, immediately thereafter we find the words: "If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other." This common preamble, placed before *lakin* (but), affirms Divine Providence and the Divine Power to prefer and realize what is possible in theory although it might choose not to actualize it as such. After the particle of emendation (*lakin*) two things are emphasized: 1) first, nothing can happen in the kingdom of Allah except what He allows and intends: "but Allah fulfills His plan"; and, second: the Will and the intention of Allah in this case was that the wills of the people should be diverse and divergent: "But they chose to wrangle." This represents perfection par excellence and calls for adjustment, rectitude, and a meticulous balance between the rights and responsibilities of man under the supervision of the Higher Divine Will, which operates in and governs all creation.

> 2) And if Allah had so Willed, He would have made you one nation, but (He Willed it otherwise) in order to test you in what He has given you."[217]

Please note carefully the words of the first verse "But they chose to wrangle" and " but Allah fulfills His plan," and in this second verse the words "but in order to test you in what He has given you." The words of the first verse, "Allah fulfills His plan," refer to the freedom of man which involves the freedom to disagree and the requirement of being subject to a test, as has been mentioned in these words of the Qur'an: "But they chose to wrangle" and "but in order to test you in what he has given you." In other words, Allah wanted His servants to

[217] Qur'an 5:48

use their free will and choose for themselves if they would follow the path of righteousness and obedience or go the other way and refuse to abide by His commandments and law. The words of Allah in this verse, "in what He has given you," are very general in their implication and include all the blessings that Allah has bestowed upon His servants, as well as the resources He has given them to enable them to discharge this great responsibility.

> 3) If Allah so Willed, He could make you all one people: but He leaves straying whom He pleases, and He guides whom He pleases: but you shall certainly be called to account for all your actions.[218]

In this third verse we see that two specific aspects concerning the Higher Divine Will and the will of Allah's servants have been placed side by side in one and the same perspective. The words of Allah "He sends astray whom He Will and guides whom He Will," are identical to the words "but Allah fulfills His plan." Similarly, the Divine Words, "You shall certainly be called to account for all your actions," describe what has also been mentioned in these words, "but in order to test you in what He has given you!" This verse has brought together all that has been described at different places in the Qur'an. A glance at the context of all such verses gives us a sure and sound explanation of the text, because the different parts of the Qur'an are designed to explain each other.

The use of the two words "sends astray" and "guides" in this third verse, instead of He does whatever He likes or "but in order to test you," as in the two previous verses, brings into focus the real issue and its origin by using words that draw attention to the consequences of following the path of righteousness or remaining in error out of one's own choosing and free will during one's testing and trial in this life. For example the words, "He leaves astray" or "guides," underline one of these consequences, and the words "in order to test you" refer to one of the means, while the word "He intends" covers both of these as well other aspects besides. Needless to say, the test, its means, objectives, and possibilities form an inevitable logical sequel to the fact that man is endowed with knowledge and free will as a part of the overall general planning and creation of Allah.

> 4) If Allah had so Willed He could have made them a single

[218] Qur'an 16:93

people; but He admits whom He Will to His mercy and the wrongdoers will have no protector or helper.[219]

5) If We had Willed, We could certainly have brought every soul to its true guidance; but the word from Me will come true; I will fill hell with jinns and men all together.[220]

6) If your Lord had so Willed, He could have made mankind one people; but they will not cease to dispute, except those on whom your Lord has bestowed His mercy; and for this did He create them.[221]

7) If it were Allah's Will, He could gather them together unto true guidance, so do not be one of the ignorant. It is only those who listen to the message whom He will accept.[222]

8) If Your Lord had so Willed, they would not have done it, so leave them with their inventions. And this is in order that the hearts of those who disbelieve in the Hereafter may incline to such (deceit) and that they may remain pleased with it and that they may commit what they are committing.[223]

In this verse, the words: "that they may remain pleased with it" deserve special attention, for they conclusively show that man alone is responsible for whatever he does. Man not only has the power to choose the way he behaves and acts but also cherishes his deeds and is proud of them, which establishes beyond doubt his accountability for his behavior and deeds.

9) And had your Lord Willed, those on the earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you compel mankind until they become believers?[224]

This then is the general rule laid down by Allah with respect to the workings of human free will. The wisdom of the rule is quite obvious: freedom is ingrained in human nature; the intellect embellishes this freedom, while Revelation serves to regulate and organize it. Revelation conveys the message but then leaves it to man himself to decide freely whether to believe or not. Man's reward or punishment is an inevitable result of his choice and actions.

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[219] Qur'an 42:8
[220] Qur'an 32:13
[221] Qur'an 11:18
[222] Qur'an 6:35-36
[223] Qur'an 6:112-113
[224] Qur'an 10:99

IV. *The Conclusive Rule*

A fourth group of verses describes the absolute principle respecting human freedom and its limitations. These verses form an integral part of a Muslim's belief. We have analyzed the Qur'anic teachings on responsibility and human freedom in four successive groups to indicate that our analysis is the incontrovertible summary of Divine Will and the human will. This conclusion from our research is supported by reason, is discernible through intuition and insight, and can be viewed as a distinctive mark of all our intentions or actions. This rule resulting from our analysis should be used as a guiding light in every situation and as a means of ensuring safety and security at all times and seasons. This final group of verses consists of only three:

1) And say not of anything, I shall do so and so tomorrow without adding, "Allah willing!" [225]
2) Surely, this is an admonition, so whoever will, let him take a path to his Lord, but you will not, unless Allah wills; surely Allah is ever All-Knowing, All-Wise. [226]
3) Verily, this (Qur'an) is no less than a message to (all) the worlds, to whosoever among you wills to go straight; but you shall not will except as Allah wills, the Lord of the worlds.[227]

We have already seen that the relationship of the Divine Will to the human will is similar to its relationship with all the other things created and granted existence by Allah. In other words, the human will, like the rest of the creation of Allah, is with all its characteristics, traits, and potentialities subject and subservient to the Divine Will. In fact, its subservience to the Will of Allah constitutes the very guarantee for its existence and workings as a free agent, for that is what its Creator Willed and decreed for it.

The following hadith also bears out our explanation of the Qur'anic text, which we could not have arrived at but with the help and guidance of Allah, the Most High, the Exalted. Relating it from Al-Awza'i as a *mursal* hadith,[228] Al-Baihaqi reports that: "A Jew came to

[225] Qur'an 18:23-24
[226] Qur'an 76:29-30
[227] Qur'an 81:27-29
[228] A *mursal* hadith is a Prophetic tradition resting on a chain of authorities that goes no further back than the second generation (*tabi'in*) after the Prophet (peace be upon him).

the Prophet, peace be upon him, and asked him about Divine Providence. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Providence is Allah's. He said: 'What if I want to stand up!' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Then indeed Allah Wills you to stand up!' 'And if I sit down?' he asked. 'Then indeed Allah Wills that you sit down.' He asked. 'What if I cut down this palm tree?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Then indeed Allah wants you to cut it down.' 'And if I want to leave it alone?' he asked: 'Then Allah would indeed have willed you to leave it alone.'''

Al-Auza'i says: ''Thereupon Jibril came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said to him: 'You have been given a strong argument (by Allah) as was given to Ibrahim.''' He went on to say: ''And then this verse was revealed: 'What you (O Muslims) cut down of the palm trees (of the enemy) or left standing on their stems, it was by leave of Allah and in order that He might cover with shame the rebellious transgressors.''' [229]

Al-Baihaqi remarks: ''Even though this tradition is *mursal*, i.e., it does not go back further than the second generation after the Prophet, peace be upon him, in its message and meaning it is as good as the ahadith that can be traced right back to the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself, especially because many of the sound ahadith affirm it.''

Therefore it is important for the perfection of his faith that a Muslim should believe that despite all the freedom and autonomy enjoyed by man he cannot for even a single moment detach himself from Allah, for he himself is weak, helpless, and needs Divine guidance and help at each and every step. This is the explanation of the Divine words: ''But you shall not will except as Allah Wills, the Lord of the worlds.'' [230]

Thus when we try to understand these verses without denying Divine Providence any of its attributes or ascribing to it human characteristics or refusing to acknowledge its influence over the human will, then our understanding of other verses concerning free will becomes much easier, for the subservience of all forms of creation and events to the Will of Allah is undoubtedly the only correct position in this regard.

To further elucidate the point from practical life, we may consider some effects of Divine Providence on man's freedom. Through the

[229] Qur'an 59:5
[230] Qur'an 81:29

following example we can demonstrate the extent to which we are dependent on Divine Providence to preserve and safeguard our independent identity and free will. Consider the man who decides to cultivate a particular piece of land. How does he go about it? He has to take a number of steps in order to realize his purpose. He has to plough the land, let the sun shine on it, water it properly, provide it with fertilizers and manure, obtain good seeds, and guard against harmful insects by using insecticides; and he must do his utmost to provide everything that may be required at the right time and place. He continues to work incessantly until the land is ready to yield to him the fruits of his labors.

Did any farmers anywhere in the world ever have the experience that their efforts were thwarted and frustrated by the Divine Will, that they were rendered helpless and could do nothing, or that the effects of their labors were in the least reduced or nullified by the Divine Will? If the answer to this question is in the negative, and indeed it is—then does this mean that the farmers' efforts and activities in this regard were absolutely independent of the Divine Will? The obvious answer to this is an emphatic *no*. The freedom of man has no independent existence. Whatever man achieves and produces in the field of agriculture is due solely to the Divine Will, for this is all His creation. He alone originated it by bringing it into existence out of nothing while man knew nothing about it and had no say or power over any of its parts.

Before we actually discuss the land and its cultivation, we may here ask ourselves: Whose earth is this that we plough and cultivate? Who provides us with the light of the sun that penetrates the earth? And who is the creator of the seeds? From which factory have we obtained the means to improve and develop the crop? Who gave us the water for cultivation? Who formed it and sent it down from the clouds and then gathered it in so many springs and wells? Whose will has always been active behind all these phenomena? Surely, it is the Will of Allah alone that controls and regulates all these things!

These are the basic principles involved. As to the details, when we consider the earth and the process of cultivation, we find that the part of it with which man is concerned is comparatively far simpler and less complicated, and is solely Allah's creation. In the substantive essence of the matter we find that man has no say whatever.

Man does indeed clear the soil and water it, but the complex and intricate processes that go on in the darkness of the earth and outside

it, and which give it life and beauty in the form of the most diverse forms of vegetation and foliage, are absolutely beyond the control or power of man. The question is, who then supervises and watches over all these wonderful processes? The Qur'an says: "And you see the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs). This is so, because Allah is the reality: it is He who gives life to the dead, and it is He Who has power over all things."[231]

And then when the seed is buried deep in the ground, who is it that looks after it day and night and causes it to sprout and grow: and all this while man is preoccupied in his pleasantries and is quite oblivious to what goes on around him? The Qur'an says: "It is Allah Who causes the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout. He causes the living to issue from the dead, and He is the One to cause the dead to issue from the living. This is Allah: Then how are you deluded away from the truth."[232]

Furthermore the vegetation depends on pollination, which means the transfer of pollen from a stamen to an ovule. The question is who controls and plans all this? The Qur'an provides us with an answer: "Glory to Allah, who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge."[233] And the earth—We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs)—to be observed and remembered by every devotee turning (to Allah)."[234]

Besides, who gives various vegetables and fruits their peculiar flavors and tastes? Answers the Qur'an: "And in the earth are tracts (diverse though) neighboring, and gardens of vines and fields sown with corn, and palm trees, all growing out of single roots or otherwise and watered with the same water, yet some of them We make more excellent than others to eat. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who understand."[235]

There are numerous other examples of the miraculous workings of the Divine Will. To enumerate them all would involve a long-drawn-

[231] Qur'an 22:5-6
[232] Qur'an 6:95
[233] Qur'an 36:36
[234] Qur'an 50:7-8
[235] Qur'an 13:4

out description and we may still fail to comprehend them fully. This is how the things are shaped and arranged in broadest outlines as well as in minute details by the Will of Allah, the Exalted.

In brief, we may say that man is in constant need of the support of Divine Providence, which sustains and cherishes him through various phases of his existence and life. All the practical evidence supports the view that this Divine Support forms the bedrock of man's power and ability to act as a free agent. This should also explain why man is responsible and accountable to Allah for whatever he does of his own free will, using the necessary potential and power granted to him by his loving and merciful Creator.

Chapter Two

Fate As an Excuse to Avoid Responsibility

I. *Turning the Argument on its Head*

From the perspective of Islam, using Divine Providence as a ploy to evade responsibility for one's deliberate mistakes is to negate human freedom, the great blessing of Allah upon man. Such a negation of freedom contradicts the Islamic concepts of personal responsibility and personal accountability for one's actions. In fact, Islam treats freedom and the responsibility and accountability for its right use as two sides of the same coin. In the broader framework of Islam, these two concepts of freedom and responsibility together provide an intellectual and emotional perspective that both enhances as well as sustains and preserves each of them.

The Islamic creed regarding the Divine control and overall supervision of Creation and the divinely determined importance of human effort and freedom precludes the avoidance of responsibility by the plea that everything is predetermined by the Divine Will and that one must simply accept it. The Qur'an states explicitly that such a plea will not excuse anyone from accountability for his actions and misdeeds. Furthermore, even such an assertion itself will be set down in their records as a lie, arising out of their arrogance, ignorance, and rejection of true knowledge or belief. "Those who give partners (to Allah) will say: 'If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our forefathers; nor should we have had any taboos!' So did their ancestors argue falsely, until they tasted of Our wrath. Say: 'Have you any (certain) knowledge? If so, produce it before us. You follow nothing but conjecture; You do nothing but lie!' Say: 'With Allah is the argument that reaches home: if it had been His will, He could indeed have guided you all!'"[236]

These two verses repudiate the false assertions and superstitious beliefs of those who worship false gods, because Allah alone has the conclusive argument against His Creatures. The argument used by the idolaters is turned against them. They argued: "If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him." To this the second verse answers: "If it had been His Will, He could indeed have guided you

[236] Qur'an 6:148-149

all!'' In other words, if Allah, had guided them in the sense they had in mind they could not have expected any reward for any good they might do, for it would not have been the result of their own free choice or honest effort. They tried to avoid responsibility for idolatry on the plea that it was preordained for them by Divine Will. They argued that they could not be punished for it because they had little or no choice in what was thrust upon them by a previously fixed fate.

If we extend this argument, we find that in such a case they would not qualify for any rewards either for any good they might do, for it would be something forced and not the outcome of their own free choice or will. True indeed are the words of Allah, the Supreme: ''If it had been your Lord's will, they would all have believed, all who are on earth! Will you then compel all people, against their will, to believe?''[237]

It is false to argue that they should have been compelled to follow guidance, because Allah gave them the freedom to choose belief and righteousness and, equipped them with everything necessary for this purpose in accordance with His Divine Will, so that out of their own free will they could choose and abide by truth and virtue and then get their reward. Both of these courses are ordained by the Divine Will. In the first case, when they make a wrong choice, they argue, ''If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him,'' thereby implying that they had no freedom of action and therefore deserve neither reward nor any punishment. But when they take the second course and willingly bear the responsibilities ordained by Allah, they argue that they are behaving as people endowed with free will, free choice, and freedom of action, ready to answer for their actions and face their consequences, whether good or bad.

The Qur'an in many places has repudiated such false assertions of the idolaters. For example: ''The worshippers of false gods say: 'If Allah had so Willed, we should not have worshipped aught but Him, neither we nor our fathers, nor should we have prescribed prohibitions other than His.' So did those who went before them. But are Messengers charged with aught but to preach the clear message?''[238] ''And they say: 'If it had been the Will of (Allah), Most Gracious, we should not have worshipped such (deities).' But they cannot have any knowledge of (His having willed) such a thing. They do nothing but

[237] Qur'an 10:99
[238] Qur'an 16:35

lie! Or have We, perchance, given them a Revelation before this (to the contrary), to which they are holding fast?''[239]

This leads us to two important results:

1) If Allah had guided aright all men and prevented them from doing any wrong or committing any sin, which Allah could easily have done, this would have transformed human beings into angels and rendered all their human responsibilities and obligations meaningless since these require freedom of choice and action. In the following pages we shall take up in detail the various possibilities regarding the interrelationship of the two wills.

2) When people try to absolve themselves of their obligations on the pretext that they are helpless in the face of the Divine Will, they in fact reject the blessing with which Allah has honored them—the blessing of free will. This is nothing short of rejecting the pattern fixed for human nature by the higher Will of Allah. In such a case man could not rightfully hope for any reward for following and obeying Him. None of these false assertions is supported by any factual evidence in life. And both the Qur'an and the hadith explicitly and conclusively reject and repudiate them.

II. *The Four Possible Relationships Between Divine Providence and Human Freedom*

We can consider four possible forms of relationship between the two wills: 1) Whenever the Will of the Creator is enforced it cancels or nullifies the will of the creatures. This proposition is false because: a) if we accept this as true we would also have to assert that obedience and sin, faith and disbelief, virtue and evil are matters in which man has no say and human effort has no role to play. This view rules out any accountability on the part of man for his deeds, whereas the fact is that he is a responsible being and subject to being rewarded or punished for his actions; b) we would have to admit that man is a helpless creature, whereas the fact is that he is created and blessed by Allah with such powers and faculties as clearly distinguish him from many of Allah's other creatures and give him excellence over them; and c) it also conflicts with the clear revealed texts that affirm man 's freedom. This proposition therefore is wrong and should be discarded.

2) The Will of the Creator nullifies its own effectiveness and com-

[239]Qur'an 43:20-21

petence—something absolutely impossible—in order to broaden the scope of human freedom and help achieve its purpose and effectiveness. Undoubtedly this proposition is even more flimsy and nefarious than the first one. Some of the most important reasons for this may be enumerated as follows: a) it upsets the entire order of things by presenting the weak dependent creatures as more powerful and important than their Designer and Creator; b) it presumes the suspension and weakness of Divine Providence, which as is out of the question; c) it forebodes an effective end to human freedom, since human freedom cannot exist or survive in defiance of Allah's Will and Support; and d) this atheistic view is in direct conflict with the revealed texts and *shar'iah*.

3) The Divine Will is neutral toward man and does not interfere in the exercise of his freedom of action. This proposition is also wrong because: a) to say that Divine Providence is neutral is to suspend Allah's inexorable role in sustaining part of His creation and to deny that the human will is a constituent part of Allah's creation, the true richness, profusion and diversity of which no human mind can ever comprehend; how could we treat the human will as something different form the rest of the created universe when there are no other exceptions in the Divinely devised scheme of things; b) such neutrality would eliminate the human will and freedom, because every created being is in constant need of support by its Creator and cannot subsist by itself; and c) this proposition also conflicts with the Qur'an and the *sunnah*. The attitude and relationship of the Divine Will vis-a-vis man is invariably identical to what they are towards other creatures. Thus man has a free will because it is sustained and preserved by its Creator, Who has endowed it with characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of the creatures in the universe, namely, freedom and the power to choose among various possible courses of action depending entirely on a man's intention and practical conduct in a manner fixed by Allah. Why then do some people deny this blessing of Allah on His servants by casting doubts about the effectiveness of their freedom? Should we call human free will by some other name that would only distort and destroy its real significance?

If we extend this rather weird line of argument we might as well deny that man possesses knowledge merely because we find in the Qur'an that, "He taught man that which he knew not," and "he has created man: he has taught him speech (and intelligence)," and, "he taught Adam the names of all things," or in the words of Joseph, "I

will indeed guard them with full knowledge." Do we really have to negate the limited knowledge of man in order to prove the infinite and limitless knowledge of Allah? Or must we assert our freedom or knowledge by denying our belief in the Will and Knowledge of Allah? The truth is that man has been endowed by Allah with various powers, faculties, and facilities, the most prominent of these being freedom of choice and action. Man enjoys an independent existence of his own and is a responsible being. We must always remember the various forms and operations of the laws of *taysir* or facilitation and of *istidraj* or gradual drawing toward the final punishment.

Whether viewed as a whole or in parts, all of man's powers and resources and their various manifestations, are fully and absolutely subservient to Allah's Will. Indeed, man's very existence, endowments, and performance are entirely dependent on the Divine Wisdom, Mercy and Justice that comprehend the entire creation.

Chapter Three

Divine Providence and the Last Acts of Man

When a man perseveres and follows the righteous way, he is helped and blessed with Divine Support in a most effective manner. If, on the other hand, a man sticks to his evil ways and refuses to reform, his path is also made smooth for him. The Qur'an describes it as *istidraj* or drawing someone gradually to his punishment. As we have shown above, both Divine support and the gradual approach of punishment or *istidraj* are a natural extension of virtue or evil, like good and bad seeds that sprout, grow into trees, and bring forth sweet or bitter fruit.

Both the Qur'an and hadith mention certain situations to which at first glance the application of this principle may seem difficult. The Qur'an says, "None but those who are lost feel secure from the scheme of Allah." [240] This is why the Companions, especially those most prominent among them like Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq, used to say, "Even if I were to find one of my footsteps already in Paradise, I would still not feel secure against the plan of Allah."

The books of ahadith have recorded many sound traditions about men who continue to do good deeds all their lives but are finally overtaken by a preordained decree of Allah and end their final days in evil deeds, so that they are consigned to the Fire. Similarly there are others who spend most of their days in evil, but then in fulfillment of the Divine Decree end their days with good deeds and then enter Paradise along with other good people.

There are many sound ahadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, which say that no-one shall enter Paradise on account of his own actions alone. Bukhari relates from Abu Hurairah who reported the Prophet, peace be upon him, as saying, "No one's good actions alone will be enough to cause him to enter Paradise." The people asked him: "And not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "Yes, and not even I shall enter Paradise but with the bounty and mercy of Allah. So follow the right and the middle course, and let none of you desire death, for if he is good he might increase his reward and if he is sinful he might be given the opportunity to repent and reform." [241]

Bukhari relates that The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Each

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[240] Qur'an 7:99

[241] Bukhari and Muslim.

one of you is collected in the womb of his mother for forty days, and then turns into a clot for an equal period (of forty days), and turns into a piece of flesh for a similar period (of forty days), and then Allah sends an angel and orders him to write four things, namely, his provision, his age, and whether he will be of the wretched or the blessed (in the Hereafter). Then the soul is breathed into him. And, by Allah, a person among you may do deeds of the People of the Fire until there is only a cubit's distance between him and the Fire, but then that writing (by the angel) precedes, and he does the deeds of the People of Paradise and enters it; and a man may do the deeds of the People of Paradise until there is only a cubit or two between him and Paradise, and then that writing precedes and he does the deeds of the People of the Fire and enters it.''[242]

It is also related by Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurairah that he said, ''We witnessed along with Allah's Messenger, peace be upon him, the (campaign of) Khaibar. Allah's Messenger told some of his companions about a man who claimed to be a Muslim 'This man is from the People of the Fire.' When the battle started the man fought very bravely and received a great number of wounds and was crippled. At this, one of the Companions said to the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'O Allah's Messenger! Do you know what the man you described as from among the People of the Fire has done? He has fought very bravely for Allah's cause and he has received many wounds!' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, ''But he is indeed one of the People of the Fire.' Some of the Muslims were about to have some doubts about that statement. So while the man was in that state the pain caused by the wounds grew worse, so much that he put his hand into his quiver and took out an arrow and committed suicide with it. Off went some men from among the Muslims to Allah's Messenger and said: 'O Allah's Messenger, Allah has made your statement true. So and so has committed suicide.' At this Allah's Messenger said, 'O Bilal! Get up and announce in public: none will enter Paradise but a believer, and Allah may support this religion (Islam) with a wicked man.''[243]

These three ahadith, like many others, might appear on the surface to suggest that action is insignificant in relation to its reward and that Divine Providence may suddenly shift toward the end of a person's

[242] Bukhari, on *Al-Qadr* (Divine Foreordainment); Muslim has also recorded it.

[243] Bukhari, chapter on The Reward for One's Deeds Depends on One's Last Deeds.

life and deny him the reward of a lifetime of righteousness. These two appearances disagree with all the principles that we have established so far in the this book on the basis of the Qur'an and hadith.

These traditions, however, do pose a very important question that must be answered in the light of these principles. To begin with, the issue should be recast by posing the following two questions. First, do these traditions really in any way lessen the importance of good deeds, and second, is it possible that a man's work of a lifetime may be lost in a matter of a few moments and rendered useless by his one last act? The answer to the first question is that these traditions are not meant to diminish in the least the importance of good deeds. Their purpose is to draw our attention to three important facts:

1) The purpose of these ahadith, first and foremost, is to underline the great bounty bestowed by Allah on his faithful servants by giving them in Paradise a reward far greater than they really deserve for their good deeds, no matter how long and hard they might have striven in His Cause. For example, it would be just for a man to receive the pleasure and comforts of this worldly life as a reward for his good deeds without expecting anything else. The well-known story of the Israelite worshipper may be cited as an example to illustrate this point. Similarly, as a reward for their good deeds, good people might be given certain enjoyment of Paradise for a period similar to that which they had spent in worship or even equivalent to their entire earthly lives.

The sort of reward the Qur'an and the *sunnah* promise man is nothing but the sheer bounty of Allah for His servants. Therefore no one will enter Paradise on account of his own good deeds alone, as stated by the Prophet, peace be upon him. This fact is mentioned in order to elucidate the bounty and mercy of Allah so that we will strive even harder in His cause, and do our best to thank Him for His great blessings on us.

2) The purpose of these ahadith, secondly, is to warn man against pride and conceit in his accomplishments, which cannot exist independently of the great bounty bestowed by Allah upon man. Such arrogance leads to spiritual degeneration. Islam teaches that no good deed is valid without purity of intention and self-reformation, so a person's work of a life-time may be ruined if he or she is not genuinely motivated. Therefore man must be warned against pride in his good deeds in order to encourage him to do better and work still harder.

3) These ahadith also emphasize the fact that a servant should always try to do best, for he does not know when all of a sudden his last

moment might arrive. A true believer does not wait for the morning to do what he could do in the evening before, nor does he postpone to the evening what he could do early in the morning. Thus in the context of Muslim traditional consciousness the call to be particularly alert about one's last deeds is an invitation to act righteously each and every moment of one's life. "No soul knows what it shall gather on the morrow, nor does any one know where it shall die!"[244]

This interpretation of these texts is supported and further elucidated by various other sound traditions which lay stress on the good beginning of deeds just as they do on the last deeds. Examples are the ahadith on good intentions, those teaching that a Muslim should pronounce Allah's name whenever beginning anything, and many others containing various supplications of the morning and evening. The Qur'an says, "So give glory to Allah, when you reach eventide and when you rise in the morning. Yea, to Him be praise, in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon and when the day begins to decline."[245] This verse comprehends all the possible times and places.

Taken together, these texts do not purport to diminish the importance and significance of good deeds in the least. How can it be otherwise when the Qur'an itself says, "Enter Paradise because of (the good) which you did (in the world);"[246] "Such will be the Garden of which you are made heirs for your (good) deeds (in life)."[247] Is it then reasonable to use the hadith, "no one's actions alone will suffice to make one enter Paradise," to controvert the Qur'anic texts without understanding how both the Qur'an and the hadith fully agree with each other on broader common objectives.

To sum up, Allah shows bountiful grace and mercy in admitting His servants to Paradise by giving them a far greater reward than they actually deserve. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has drawn our attention to this great bounty of our Lord to make us appreciate its true significance so we can offer our thanks to Him by working honestly and sincerely in His cause. This honesty requires working more efficiently and in the best possible way to improve and develop our efforts still further.

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[244] Qur'an 31:34
[245] Qur'an 30:17-18
[246] Qur'an 16:32
[247] Qur'an 43:72

Thus we see that the main purpose both of the Qur'an and of the *sunnah* is one and the same, namely to urge man to develop, improve, and purify his actions and free them of all defects. They do not contain even the slightest hint of diminishing the importance or significance of man's actions.

The answer to the second question is that Divine Providence never changes its attitude all of a sudden toward a faithful servant so as to consign him in the end to the Fire. The prophecy of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that the man who fought courageously in battle is of the People of the Fire is misconstrued. It does not imply a sudden change of direction, as is evident from the announcement made by Bilal in compliance with the command of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Bilal was told to announce: "None will enter Paradise but a believer." The clear implication is that the warrior in question did not have faith. This is also obvious from the Prophet's words in ordering Bilal to make the announcement. He said, "Allah may support this religion through a wicked man." This throws further light on the real character of this warrior. It shows that debauchery and immorality had become the hall-mark of his character and that he was never able to get rid of these evils and had no capacity left for any true and genuine thought or act.

There is another tradition, however, regarding the same incident recorded by Bukhari in the chapter on the campaign of Khaibar, which provides a clear answer and a convincing explanation of any ahadith that may seem to refer to a sudden change of attitude of Providence sufficient to vitiate all the previous good acts of a true believer. Bukhari relates from Sahl that he said: "During one of his military campaigns, the Prophet, peace be upon him, encountered the pagans, and the two armies fought and then each of them returned to their camps. Among (the army of the) Muslims there was a man who would follow every pagan separated from the army and strike him with his sword. It was said: 'O Allah's Messenger! None has fought so bravely as so-and-so (namely, that brave Muslim).' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'He is from the Dwellers of the Hell-Fire!' The people said: 'Who amongst us will be of the Dwellers of Paradise if this (man) is from the Dwellers of the Hell-Fire?' Then a man from amongst the people said, 'I will follow him and accompany him in his fast and slow movements.' The brave man got wounded, and wanting to die at once, he put the handle of his sword on the ground and its tips in between his breasts, and then threw himself over it, committing suicide. Then the man (who had watched him) returned to the Prophet, peace be upon

him, and said: 'I testify that you are the Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet said: 'What is this?' The man told him the whole story. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'A man may do what may seem to the people to be the deeds of the Dwellers of Paradise, but (in fact) he may be of the Dwellers of the Hell-Fire, and a man may do what may seem to the people to be the deeds of the Dwellers of the Hell-Fire, but he may be from the Dwellers of Paradise.'''

The words of the Prophet, ''what may seem to the people,'' show that there may be situations when a thing is not in reality what it appears to be superficially. Thus at times what might seem good or bad to common people may in fact be quite the opposite.

The reality in some cases may never be known. There may be some about whom we may remain in the dark. When in some cases truth is unveiled it serves as a warning and a lesson to man to do his utmost in all his apparent and hidden actions. Allah alone has true knowledge of these people and He alone watches over them. Revelation of the truth warns man to guard against things that might render all his good deeds in vain and make him end his earthly life engrossed in evil. By warning us, Allah wants to save us from both of these hazards and keep us free from all evils so we may end our days on earth with deeds that are good and well pleasing in His sight.

These texts give us a glimpse of the reality behind the curtain. They give us an inkling of the secrets regarding some of Allah's servants. They are not what they appear to be. No one except Allah knows the truth about them, and surely He shall deal with them justly and give them the recompense they really deserve. And true indeed are the words of Allah, the Exalted:

> Yea, to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: so that He rewards those who do evil, according to their deeds, and He rewards those who do good with what is best; those who avoid major sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults, verily your Lord is ample in forgiveness. He knows you well when He brings you out of the earth, and when you are hidden in your mothers' wombs. Therefore justify not yourselves. He knows best who it is that guards against evil.[248]

[248] Qur'an 53:31-32

Chapter Four

The Meaning of Mash'ia (Will)

I. *Two Basic Uses of the Word "Will" in the Qur'an*

The Arabic word *mash'ia*, meaning will or volition, and its derivatives are used in various senses depending upon their context. Many of the philosophical difficulties resulting from mixing up these various senses may be resolved by classifying these meanings into two basic categories:

1) The All-inclusive word volition or will may be used in its original sense to comprehend all forms of creation including their activities, characteristics, and other such secondary qualities as are determined by the relationship of Divine Providence to various forms of creation without any exception. This broad concept of "will" is based on the all-inclusive view that Allah is Eternal and Absolute, Exalted and Supreme, and that He created and perfected His creation and exercises over it real, complete, and total supervision. This all-inclusive concept necessarily includes man and his free will and freedom of choice, for Allah, the Exalted, does whatever He pleases and commands whatever He wishes, and all that exists is entirely dependent on His Divine Will. In this sense the word is used exclusively for Divine Providence.

2) Limited. The word *mash'ia* is also used in a limited sense to signify human volition as designed by the Divine Will and equipped with all the capabilities and abilities necessary for man to fulfil his obligations as a responsible being. One's principal obligation is to choose freely to obey and worship Allah either out of love for Him or in order to earn the reward for choosing the right path and thereby win His pleasure in an iterative process so that each person becomes well pleased with Allah as Allah does with him or her. One may in this sense also misuse one's will by making a wrong choice and find oneself in misery and distress.

The word "will" may in this limited sense be used to denote the laws governing various created things and beings. The first and foremost of these is the law that all of them are totally and absolutely subservient to the will of Allah.

Man stands apart form the rest of creation because of his free will and power of choice, which Allah has granted him in His wisdom as an expression of His attributes of mercy and justice. Allah at the same

time informs us through the most trusted source of Revelation that He, the Exalted One, does not wrong people. Rather they wrong themselves.

II. *Perspectives on Good and Evil as the Will of Allah*

These two basic uses of the word *mash'ia* by the Qur'an in so obvious a manner leave little doubt or vagueness about its true significance. Therefore there is little justification or excuse for anyone to be ignorant of its meaning.

People who speak about predestination and providence without considering or understanding the various senses and perspectives in which this term is used have been rightly reprimanded in the Qur'an as "those who fail to understand (even) a single fact?"

The Qur'an accuses these people of falsehood, conceit, and ignorance: "If some good befalls them, they say, 'This is from Allah,' but if evil comes, they say, 'This is from you (O Prophet).' Say, 'All things are from Allah,' but what has come to these people that they fail to understand (even) a single fact? Whatever good, (O man!) happens to you, is from Allah, but whatever evil happens to you, is from your (own soul). And We have sent you as a Messenger to (instruct) mankind. And enough is Allah for a witness."[249]

The traditional commentators explain the word, "good," used here as meaning the blessings of Allah, whereas the "evil" means adversity, trials, and tribulations, which man has to live through and over which he has no control whatever.

Ibn Al-Qayyim mentions various opinions of the earlier scholars and then remarks: "The earlier scholars unanimously repudiate the view attributed to Abi Al-Aliya that the 'good' and the 'evil' in this verse refer to obedience and revolt." He goes on to say: "It is said that both of these senses are relevant, because every act of obedience to Him, for which He grants man strength and power, is also a blessing and includes the various blessings of this life and of the life hereafter, and similarly whatever sin a man commits is also a misfortune." This is explained by the fact that Allah has described evil as a recompense for the sin of man, saying, "but whatever evil happens to you, is from your (own) soul." In other words, the action that entails this recompense must also of necessity proceed from man himself. Thus for both

[249]Qur'an 4 :78-79

the evil action as well as its evil recompense, man himself is responsible, and there is no contradiction in saying that they are both predetermined by Allah. This indicates Allah's justice, wisdom, providence, and kindness, whereas from the human side it shows man's evil and ugliness.[250]

We can identify five different perspectives in the above two verses on good and evil as the will of Allah:

1) Good fortune is ascribed to the Divine Will. This is the first perspective of the idolaters.

2) Misfortunes are ascribed to the Prophet, peace be upon him. These first two perspectives not only indicate confusion and ignorance but expose the nefarious designs and corrupt thinking and beliefs of the idolaters. They attributed to Allah whatever pleased them, not as a recognition of Allah's bounty but in order to isolate the Prophet, peace be upon him, and exclude him from this Divine Bounty. For a similar purpose they attributed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, whatever they did not like. Furthermore when they said that misfortunes had not been brought upon them by Allah, they did so not as a mark of propriety and respect for Allah but rather as an affront to the Prophet's person.

In both of the two cases the use of the word is wrong due to the nefarious designs that prompted them. The first was an affront to the Prophet, peace be upon him, while the other failed to refer the action to the Divine Will.

3) Fortunes and misfortunes are both ascribed to Allah. "Say: 'All things are from Allah.'" This refutation of the assertion of the hypocrites has two aspects. First, in answer to their intended affront to the Prophet, peace be upon him, Allah attributes to Himself all that befalls them, telling them that the things that they claim have been caused by the Prophet are in fact all from Allah, Who alone is the real Cause and Originator of all things. Second, ascribing both fortunes and misfortunes to Allah tells them that they cannot by their false assertions suspend Divine Providence, because its suspension is impossible. Evidently this correct Qur'anic use of the term refers exclusively to the Divine Will.

4) Both wills are created by Allah. The fourth perspective or position refers to the Divine Will and to the Prophet's will as a creation of the

[250] Ibn Al-Qayyim, *Shifa Al Alil Fi al-Qada wal Qadr wal-Ta'lil*, pp.159-160 (abridged), first-printing, 1323 A.H.

Will of Allah. The two wills are merely an expression of the single Will of Allah. This is suggested in the phrase: "Whatever good, (O man!) happens to you, is from Allah."

The "good" referred to here is received by a man through the help of Allah when he pursues the path of virtue. Just as whatever evil befalls a man is in consequence of his own sins. Similarly the strength and opportunity to do good is solely from Allah. The Qur'anic teaching that we should regard all the good that comes to us as emanating from Allah is a statement of fact and a mark of respect and deference to Him. Nevertheless, as suggested in the third perspective we may ascribe both fortunes and misfortunes to Allah, if so warranted by the context.

5) The will of man is the subject of *mash'ia*. In the sentence below, ostensibly the Prophet, peace be upon him, is addressed, whereas in fact the verse is addressed to his followers in order to teach and instruct them. Says Allah: "And whatever evil happens to you, is from your (own) soul."

This sentence does not conflict with the fact that whatever happens to man is with the permission of Allah. Instead it emphasizes a unique creation of the Divine Will, namely, the power it has given man to choose and act freely. This freedom, deriving from man's free will and power to exercise free choice, is granted to man by the Divine Will. This blessing of real freedom, based on a tangible free will, renders it possible and right to refer to some actions as the handiwork of man without implying any disrespect toward the infinite power of Allah.

The decisive criterion in all these uses of the term, *mash'ia*, lies in the difference between its unspecified application to infinite Divine Providence and its limited and specified reference to the created human will. This distinction constitutes the general rule that must be followed in dealing with the attributes of the Creator in their absolute sense and with similar but restricted attributes of human beings.

For example, power, knowledge, intention, hearing, seeing, and willing are the absolute, eternal, and infinite attributes of Allah in their perfect sense. Man also has qualities that are described by similar terms but in a limited sense of created attributes. Thus man can act but only in specific fields prescribed for him by Divine Will, and there is no harm in using these words to refer to human attributes so long as one keeps in mind the broader conceptual and perceptional framework designated above as "all-inclusive." The Qur'an itself is full of such usages.

III. *Qur'anic Distinctions Between the Two Wills*

Some Qur'anic verses deal with the eternal Divine Will in its perfect form and absolute sense, while others describe the two wills together and their mutual relationship and possible forms. Some of the important verses especially the verses 4:78-79 discussed in this chapter, definitively remove any ambiguity or confusion between the two wills. These verses depict both aspects of *mash'ia* and place its usages side by side in a common context in order to clarify the distinction between them. We have explained the similar Qur'anic verses that describe the two principles of *taysir* or divine aid and *istidraj* or gradual approach of punishment. The ahadith also explain the distinction between the two forms of *mash'ia* and remove any doubts about Divine Justice, Mercy and Wisdom. No one can complain that the Qur'an ignored the issue or did not explain it fully.

We emphasize this because many people believe the religious texts have not dealt with this issue in sufficient detail. Even some of the scholarly writers convey a similar impression. An example is the book, *Dastur Al-Akhlaq Fil Qur'an*, by Dr. Mohammad Abdullah Darraz, may Allah bless his soul, a scholar renowned for his erudition, scholarship, and piety.

The learned writer says, "And the problem, which we have yet to understand and appreciate clearly, and the one about which the different Islamic schools of thought hold divergent views, can be expressed as follows: When Allah calls upon us to use our powers as free agents, after having subjected to us all these general and specific powers and resources, does He abandon us and leave us entirely on our own? Does He for no reason whatever interfere in our world in any way? Or does He interfere, without our knowledge of it, sometimes supernaturally, sometimes concretely and immediately, in the form of help or support or abandonment. And does He interfere by small applications of power or limited acts that do not contradict His bounty or frustrate the purpose of trying man in various forms but merely point or indicate the course of our activities and thereby determine their movement in one or the other direction, without our ever being able to even guess it? This is the problem which the Qur'an has not dealt with or explained sufficiently. Rather it appears to enjoin in this field a kind of commendable caution as mentioned in the answer contained in the latter part of the verse: 'Say with Allah is the

argument that reaches home; if it had been His Will, He could indeed have guided you all.'' [251]

We have read and re-read these excerpts many times, in the hope that they might contain answers to the hypothetical questions raised by the writer or at least some reference to the different opinions of various schools of thought in order to explain or refute them. But we were surprised and puzzled to find that the discussion of this issue ended in this strange manner with these questions thus abruptly slamming the door shut without providing answers to his question why the Qur'an allegedly did not treat the issue sufficiently and clearly. We concluded that the writer considers this obscurity a kind of commendable caution, which is why he did not discuss the issue in detail and left some questions unanswered.

Following the example of the earlier scholars, Dr. Muhammad Darraz on the one hand avoids the discussion of Divine Providence and forecordainment, and on the other tries to resolve the (apparent) contradiction between the demands of justice and the idea of an absolute Divine Power by the plea that since Revelation is silent on this point we are unable to use it in resolving this issue.

It was puzzling indeed how the learned writer could pen these words, unless he was referring to discussion of the actual way in which Allah's Will operates respecting His creation. Discussion and explanation of this issue is hardly appropriate here, for it belongs to those higher metaphysical issues directly related to the attributes of Allah, and beyond the limited range of human reason. Our intellect cannot understand or appreciate the hidden secrets behind these attributes, nor can it fully comprehend them, for they lie outside its reach. We do not believe the great writer, may Allah bless him, meant or even wanted to say that according to the Qur'an these are matters that belong to the sphere of the unseen so that the Qur'an can be considered commendable in its deliberate obscurity and caution.

We believe the writer did indeed have in mind the signs and expressions of Divine Providence, for he can mean nothing else. We find that on this matter the Qur'an has stated its position in sufficient clarity and detail and reprimands those who still fail to understand and appreciate its teachings. ''So what is wrong with these people that they fail to understand any word?'' [252]

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[251] Muhammad Abdullah Darraz, *Dastur Al-Akhlaq Fil Quran*, 219.
[252] Qur'an 4:78

In particular, we reject, with all the emphasis at our command, the form of questioning in which he says, "Does Allah abandon us completely?" and, after raising a number of other questions, asserts, "This is a problem which the Qur'an has not dealt with clearly and in sufficient detail." Is it reasonable that a reader of the Qur'an should go away without any answer to this kind of serious question. Should he be left alone without guidance to read such clear verses in the book of Allah as these: "But you cannot will except as Allah Wills;" "He leads astray whomever He pleases, and guides whomsoever He pleases;" "Verily Allah commands whatever He pleases;" "Say All things are from Allah;" "Is it you that cause it to grow or are We the cause?" "And there is not a creature on the earth but its sustenance depends on Allah;" "Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure;" and "And Our command is but a single (act), like the twinkling of an eye."

One hadith is sufficient to indicate the overall trend in the *sunnah* and to exemplify the conformity of all the *sahih* ahadith with the Qur'anic texts. Both Imam Ahmad and Imam Muslim on the authority of Ibn 'Umar relate that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Everything is predestined, even incapacity and intelligence."[253]

In the face of these and many other such texts in the Qur'an and the *sunnah* is there really any justification for asking if Allah has "abandoned us and left us entirely on our own" or for alleging that the description of the Qur'an is obscure on this point.

In the end we would like to ask, is there anything that could subsist by itself if Allah would abandon it and leave it on its own? Is human will not a creation of His like the rest of the universe? And could it continue to exist if its Creator should withdraw and leave it alone?

O Allah! Do not hand us over even for a moment or even for a shorter space than that into the control of our own souls. O You on whom all beings depend, You whom slumber never seizes and the supervision of all existence never wearies! There is surely no power outside of Allah, the Most High, the Supreme!

To redeem our pledge and meet the demands of justice, we supplicate to Allah for His vast mercy, pleasure, and forgiveness for

[253] *Al-Muwwata* (Malik), chapter on predestination; *Al-Musnad* (Ahmed), v.2,110; *Sahih Muslim*, on predestination.

ourselves, and for the pious and devout scholar, Dr. Mohammad Abdullah Darraz, who through his above mentioned book did indeed render great service to the Qur'an. Man is but man, and perfection is for Allah alone. No one is infallible except he whom Allah chooses to grant innocence.

Chapter Five

Prohibition of Discussing Predestination

I. *Sources for the Prohibition*

Islam seeks to instruct and train individuals and entire communities to safeguard their beliefs, thoughts and energies. The Prophet, peace be upon him, taught that one way of doing this is to put an end to useless disputation and barren sophistry. Muslims have been forbidden especially to indulge in bickering over *qadr* or fate.

Allah says, "Verily all things have We created in proportion and due measure."[254] In reference to this verse, Imam Ahmad narrates from Waki' that he said Sufiyan Al-Thawri reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah that he said: "The idolaters of the Quraish came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, wrangling over *qadr* (predestination or fate). Thereupon this verse was revealed: 'The day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces (they will hear), "Taste the touch of Hell. Verily all things have We created in proportion and measure."'[255]

Al-Bazzaz relates from Amar ibn Shu'aib who on the authority of his father reported him as saying that the people who denied *qadr* were the subject of the following verse: "Truly those in sin are the ones straying in mind and mad. The day they will be dragged through the Fire on their faces they will hear, 'Taste ye the touch of Hell. Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure."' Ahmad relates that one day when the Prophet, peace be upon him, came out of his home he found some people discussing predestination. His face became red like the grains of a pomegranate and he said: "What is the matter with you that you strike a part of Allah's book against other parts of it. This is what destroyed those who lived before you."[256]

Imam Ahmad also relates from Abdullah ibn Abbas that he was told that a man who denied predestination had just arrived in town. Since he was already blind at that time, he said, "Take me to him." The people said, "O Abu Abbas! What do you propose to do with him?" He replied: "By Him in whose hands is my life, if I can lay my hands

[254] Qur'an 54:49

[255] Muslim, Al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah have also reported the hadith of Waki' from Sufiyan Al-Thawri to the same effect.

[256] A sound hadith, it is reported by Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah.

on him I will bite off his nose or will break his neck with my hands, for I heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say, 'It is as if I can see the women of Bani Fahr on their way to Khazraj moving their buttocks like idolatrous women. This was the first polytheistic act on the part of this community. By Him in whose hand is my soul, their corrupt thinking would ultimately cause them to think that Allah did not predetermine good as they now think evil is not foreordained (by Allah).'''[257]

Imam Ahmad also reports from Naf'i that he said, ''Ibn 'Umar, had a friend in Syria who used to write to him. Once Abdullah ibn 'Umar wrote to him saying that he had heard that he had said something regarding predestination (that was untrue and contrary to Islamic beliefs). Then Ibn 'Umar added, 'therefore I don't want you to write to me any more, for I heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say, 'There will be among my community some people who will deny predestination.'''[258]

Ibn Abdul Bar on the authority of Al-Nazal ibn Sabrah has recorded in the chapter on knowledge that Ali was told, ''There are some people who say that Allah does not know what is going to happen until it does actually happen.'' At this he said, ''May their mothers weep over them! On what authority do they claim this?'' The people said, ''They cite the Qur'anic verse,'And we shall try you until We test (literally: ''know'') those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience; and we shall try your reported (mettle).'''[259]

Ali said: ''The ignorant shall perish.'' Then he ascended the pulpit, praised Allah and said, ''O People! seek knowledge and act on it and teach others. And if anyone of you does not understand anything in the book of Allah let him ask me. I have been told that there is a group of people who say 'Allah does not know what is going to happen until it actually does happen, and they quote the verse, 'And We shall try you until We test those among you who strive their utmost and persevere in patience.' The words 'until We test' in this verse mean 'until We see those persevere who are obliged to do their utmost in the cause of Allah.' So if they strive their utmost and remain steadfast

[257] *Musnad* (Ahmad), v.1, 370.

[258] Musnad (Ahmad), Abu Daw'ud, Al-Tirmidhi, and Al-Hakim. Al-Tirmidhi says it is a sound but rare hadith.

[259] Qur'an 47:31

in all the hardships that they might face, they shall have done their duty.''

Ibn Kathir says, ''The word 'knowing' here means 'seeing,' for seeing refers to what actually exists, whereas knowing is more general and connotes both the existent and the not yet existent. And Allah, the Exalted, does know what happened in the past, and what shall happen in the future and that which shall not. There is a consensus of opinion on this among the great jurists and *Ahl Al-Sunnah wal Jama'at*. Ibn Abbas and others also are of the same opinion. According to them the words 'until We test' mean 'until We see (for Ourselves).'''[260]

II. *Principles of Prohibition*

All these texts, despite their different degrees of authenticity in the chain of narrators, show the hazards of discussing predestination and the repugnance of the Companions for those who indulged in these frivolities. What was the cause of such an attitude, and what exactly are the dimensions of this problem? We have before us three definite and clear cut rules for treating this issue of *qadr* and Divine Providence in the field of education and other higher studies. Another, the fourth rule, which is of a more general nature, may be added to the above three. These rules may be described as follows:

1) Adhere strictly to the texts of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* on this issue and reject what is not authenticated by them.

2) Believe in the unseen in the matter of divine attributes, and use the created works of Allah as illustrations.

3) Start with the principle that the difference between the action of Divine Will and the action of created wills is an extension of the difference between the Person and Attributes of Allah and the nature and attributes of created beings.

4) Avoid these subjects as a general rule, and, if necessary, follow the agreed principles and manner laid down in the Qur'an and *sunnah*. These may be used for explanation and persuasion without indulging in unnecessary disputation.

These principles or rules promote a constructive and positive attitude because they aim to ensure the purity of one's belief and to save one's time by preventing one from indulging in futile talk. Obviously

[260] See Ibn Kathir on the beginning of Surah *Al-'Ankabut*.

the first three of these principles are especially suitable for educational and scientific discussions in academic institutes, universities, study circles, seminars, academic conferences, training courses and other similar situations, where precise rules and principles of discussion and study are required. We shall now take up these principles one by one.

1) *Strict adherence to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and Avoidance of Arbitrary Interpretation.*

It is a fact that certain subjects are beyond the reach of human reason. Reason alone cannot determine the true nature of such subjects though it may establish the broad outline of relevant facts. An illustrative subject, under discussion here, is the Person of Allah, the Exalted. If the guidance of the Qur'an and *sunnah* is not strictly followed, then unsystematic rational methods devised and evolved by men and fashionable in metaphysical research and studies these days, may soon sway the field and dominate all our thinking and discussion of the subject. The Qur'an and *sunnah* alone can guide us out of this danger. Human reason often works on the principle of compromise through give and take. Therefore if we once lost the right path we might never be able to reach the truth or even find the right course. Unaided reason is exposed to the risk of perversion in thought and belief, which always brings the wrath of Allah upon those guilty of perversion.

A careful consideration of this aspect of Islam leaves no doubt that providing man with clear and definitive guidance is one of the great miracles of the Qur'an and of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Since the dawn of history, human reason has been unable to restrain itself within the limits beyond which it is ineffective and powerless. In the realm of natural science, such as physics, it knows and functions well within its limits, but it falters in the realm of metaphysics, i.e. beyond the observable and measurable phenomena. Its great success and precision in one realm has been matched only by its inconsistency and sterility in the other.

The limitations of human knowledge and reason are the secret of man's failure and confusion of thought in metaphysics, ethics, and jurisprudence, just as recognition of these limits is the secret of man's success in the empirical and physical sciences where man knows how to apply the correct rational method because the empirical realm is the legitimate field of activity for which man's reasoning powers are fully adequate.

The inevitable result of this yawning gap between the progress of

the material sciences and the static or even petrified condition of philosophy is now appreciated by all honest thinkers, including the Western philosophers who were the first to notice it. A case in point is the emergence of modern man whose muscles are far stronger than his reason and morals.

To remedy this situation we must return to the guidance of Islam in the Qur'an and the *sunnah*, and seek solutions from the revealed texts in the realm of knowledge where human reason is unable to function on its own, especially in the sciences that deal with doctrines of belief and norms of law.

Strict adherence to the revealed texts can save us from the mistakes others have made, as in the above examples when Ali and Ibn Abbas were told about some people who misunderstood and misinterpreted the words of Allah, "And We shall try you until We have tested you."

The above examples manifest one of the glories of Islam in that the prominent Companions not only were well familiar with these teachings but zealously practiced them. In fact, this practice was the norm in their society. The Prophet, peace be upon him, conveyed the message so effectively to his Companions that it became a part of their conscious life, and they never knowingly transgressed the bounds set down for them even in the later days of Companions like Ibn Abbas and Ibn Umar. They were ready to fight for the defense of their stand in every possible way. This is what prompted Ibn Abbas, a blind man at that time, to want to bite or break the neck of the man who denied *qadr* and led Ibn Umar to break off with his friend and to refuse to exchange letters with him.

2) *Belief in the Unseen and the Use of Allah's Created Works in the Universe for Elucidation and Explanation of What Lies Beyond Them*

Belief in the unseen, as mentioned above, is the correct and practical method for understanding the Divine attributes and the Knowledge of Allah.

Human reason is one of the blessings Allah has bestowed on man, just as He has blessed him with faculties of seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting. Although they differ in their characteristics and functions, all these blessings are finite and are created by Allah. As such their fields of competence and spheres of influence are restricted and limited. The human eye for example can see things clearly from a certain distance but cannot see them distinctly from beyond this, and if the object is still further away it disappears altogether from view.

Similarly human reason can function within a prescribed sphere

only, and it would be wrong for it to overstep its limits. The legitimate field of human reason is fairly wide. It can function safely and fruitfully in any field of life provided that it has at its disposal the proper means of investigation, research, and study. For instance, all the works of Allah are a legitimate subject of investigation for human reason. But when it comes to something that concerns the "unseen," human reason despite all its powers and competence can do no more than merely guess and conjecture, which is no substitute for truth, especially when the subject is the Person and Attributes of Allah, the Exalted.

Thus human reason provides us merely with a means to strengthen our belief in the unseen. It is a sort of window through which we may peep into the reality that lies well beyond it, far from our reach and beyond even the remotest possibility of any human intrusion.

Therefore we can trust only two things in all that concerns Providence and predestination: 1) Revelation (the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*), as has been mentioned above in the discussion on the first principle or rule; and 2) The signs of Allah's Will in creation, in the free will of man, and in human action.

The observance of these two rules will keep our knowledge well within the bounds laid down for us by Allah in the form of a creed, and will have the two-fold significance of pleasing Allah and conforming with truth and reality, which are the two main goals a man must always have in mind.

If any schools of philosophy fail to provide proper guidlines for reason and leave it wander unbridled at will into fields in which it is useless and can hardly yield any fruitful results, these schools are in fact guilty of pursuing an unscientific method. They try to use a thing improperly for something for which it was never meant, like the man who wants to see with his naked eyes distant objects outside the range of human vision, or like the skipper who has a ship with a capacity of one thousand tons but insists on loading ten thousand or even a million tons. This shows how the Islamic creed is perfectly in harmony with the true scientific method and gives us a balanced approach not found in the different schools of either classical or modern philosophy.

This should open our eyes to the Qur'anic wisdom immediately following the opening of the Divine Book, wherein belief in the unseen is described as the very first requisite for men and women truly conscious of Allah: "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most

Merciful. Alif-Lam-Mim. This is the Book, whereof there is no doubt, a guidance to those who fear Allah; who believe in the unseen.''[261]

3) *Respect for the Difference Between the Person and Attributes of the Creator and the Created*

Positing this difference in any discussion of volition or free will is the best starting point to avoid confusion. This distinction cuts the ground out from under the feet of those who would indulge in vain disputation and wrangling about predestination or *qadr* and the Divine Will. How can the will of a created being endowed with some limited potentialities be compared with the Eternal Will of Allah, who has no beginning and no end, is infinite and unlimited in power, and is Himself the Bestower and the Creator? The dissimilarity of the accidental and the real becomes meaningless if we admit that the Will of the Creator and of the wills of the created beings can confront and resist each other. Can we imagine the two wills wrestling with each other as two created wills might, with the stronger one always being dominant and uppermost.

If the answer to this is in the negative—as it definitely is—then why this controversy over determinism and free will? This whole controversy is groundless and there is no justification at all for its continuation if we bear in mind the dissimiliarity between creatures and the Person and Attributes of Allah, the Exalted.

4) *Avoiding the Subject*:

Discussing predestination and Divine Providence is permissible for education and purposes of study. Those who cannot understand the distinctions set out above respecting predestination should not indulge in wrangling about it. This is the fourth preventive measure or regulator to which the early Muslims so strictly and vehemently adhered. Human reason has its own limitations and people should be addressed according to their intelligence and understanding if we really want to help and improve their lot.

III. *Pondering the Signs of Allah*

Let us now cast a glance at the works of the Divine Will, the signs of Allah in the Created Universe, for we can consider these without any mental reservation or restriction. We shall begin with a survey of the effects of our volition and will in order to find out what has

[261] Qur'an 2:1-3

confused and misled our theologians about the issue of *qadr* or predestination.

When we look at our own free will and its field of competence we can quite easily and readily realize that any transgression of our legitimate limits is bound to leave us puzzled, confused, and helpless. But when we ponder over some of the works of the higher Divine Will, the light of truth illumines our hearts and brightens up our eyes with confidence and certainty and we are no longer perplexed and haunted by any of these doubts.

Let us take from this wide and spacious universe, supervised and controlled by the Divine Will of Allah, just one example. It is a very small example compared to the vastness of this universe; in fact, it is no more than a tiny speck. It is called the earth. The surface of this speck is sprinkled with countless smaller bits, known as living species. Out of these let us take just one, the human species, and consider its life, and see how the operation of Divine Providence is evident in it.

Divine Providence has endowed man with countless blessings; it has given him his physical form, his life, his faculties of reasoning, hearing, sight, tasting, and feelings, his heart, and a breathing system. It has provided him with sustenance, food, and drink, blessed him with the power of speech, given him knowledge, taught him religion amd morality, and showed him how to follow the right path and achieve perfection. Then it gave him freedom, a free will, and a free choice between right and wrong. Indeed, it is impossible to comprehend or number all the various blessings of Allah upon man. "If you count up the favors of Allah, never would you be able to number them.[262]

Allah has blessed man so profusely that each and every person is a separate entity receiving sustenance regularly and independently of others. Every man is an independent being who is looked after and sustained directly by Divine Providence. "There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah."[263]

This Divine Providence is not affected by time or place, but supersedes all such things completely and absolutely with a superior knowledge and wisdom. "Is it not His to create and to govern? Blessed be Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!"[264]

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[262] Qur'an 16:18
[263] Qur'an 11:6
[264] Qur'an 7:54

The last two verses quoted above relate to man and to other beings as well. But we have said nothing here about the overall effect of Divine Providence in the universe as a whole. We have taken just a small part out of this vast and huge universe, one species, man, out of innumerable others that populate the earth's surface. We have passed over the others to focus on the small area of Divine Providence in our lives. We cannot comprehend anything larger than this, and the impact of Divine Providence in even this small area can be covered only cursorily and in outline. How then could we, even if we wanted to, cover and comprehend the entire range of Divine Providence throughout the whole of the universe?

When we ponder the universe and its myriad signs of Allah we cannot but feel impelled to prostrate ourselves before Him, exclaiming: "There is nothing whatever like unto Him, and He is the One that hears and sees (all things)."[265]

There is no comparison whatsoever between this absolute, perfect, and all-inclusive Divine Providence and the volition of individual humans, who, though eternal, are yet infinitesimal particles of dust scattered over the crust of this speck called earth. Having looked at these marvels we can easily see there is no similarity in performance or action between the infinite Divine Will and the will of the particle of dust, for in principle it is impossible to compare two things unless they are similar or homogeneous.

Is there then any justification after this for thinking that the two wills are at variance and in conflict with each other, and for indulging in all those wranglings and philosophical disputations about predestination and Divine Providence, and for all the petty bickerings that surround the freedom and free will of man. "O man! What has seduced you from your Lord, Most Gracious, Who created you, fashioned you in accordance with what you are meant to be, and shaped your nature in just proportions?"[266]

In summarizing the prohibition against discussing predestination, we may repeat the four basic principles:

1) Strict adherence to the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah;
2) Belief in the Unseen and an independent examination of the physical universe;

[265]Qur'an 42:11
[266]Qur'an 82:6-8

3) Precise and proper understanding of the difference between created beings and Allah's Person and attributes; and

4) Avoiding the subject outside of academic study.

Any neglect of these rules whether in general or in any particular field is bound to cause confusion and deviation.

It is not by knowledge or thought alone that we can bridge the gulf between the proponents of free will and advocates of predestination, and between those who talk of unspecified human freedom or those who believe it is specified and limited. We can bridge this gulf only through strict adherence to the rules elucidated in the Book of Allah and in the *sunnah* of His Prophet, peace be upon him.

PART FIVE

PRESERVING FREEDOM BY DEVELOPING THE GIFT OF FREE CHOICE

Chapter One: Intention

I. Developing the Freedom of a Strong Will and Character
II. Developing the Freedom of Social Solidarity
III. Some Ahadith About Intention

Chapter Two: Independent personality

I. Independence of Belief and Morals
II. Independence as the Basis of Freedom and Accountability
III. Personal Responsibility at the Inception of Islam
IV. Personal Independence of Character as the Key to the Integrity of the Community

Chapter Three: Constant Prayer for Divine Help

I. The Psychological Elements
II. The Practical Elements
III. Supplications for Strength of Will

Chapter One

Intention

I. *Developing the Freedom of a Strong Will and Character*

Intention is the first step in the rational method of developing our innate power of free will, because it is intimately related to our freedom of choice and action and as such forms the very basis of our accountability. Intention is an inner power that abhors imposition of any limitation on its freedom.

Muslim scholars give prominence in their books to a discussion of intention in order to maintain a sense of priority. Intentions must be pure and sincere. For the acquisition of knowledge to be effective, rewarding, fruitful, and beneficial, it must be motivated by a desire to please only Allah.

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal has related from Abi Sa'id ibn Abi Nadhala Al-Ansari that he heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say, "When Allah shall gather all the former and the later generations of men on a day about which there is no doubt, a caller shall call out, 'Let those who ascribed partners in their deeds seek their reward from others than Allah, for Allah needs no partners.'"[267]

Briefly explained, this means that no one except Allah controls a person's inner life. One's intention is an integral part of one's life and no other man, however powerful, has any power whatever over another person's intention. The last resort of a Muslim when he is overwhelmed by difficulties is to save himself from the displeasure of Allah, the Exalted, by submitting his every intention to Allah.

In a sound hadith we read that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Whoever among you sees an evil should try to change it with his hands. If he is not able to do so, then with his tongue, and if he is unable to do even that, then with his heart, and this is the weakest form of faith."[268]

This hadith explicitly states that if a Muslim finds himself in one of those difficult situations where he can neither use his hands nor tongue to remove the evil he should fight it by using his intention.

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[267] Ahmad, Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah

[268] Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i,Majah (from Abi Sa'eed).

This is a natural weapon of a believer, and can never be blunted or overcome by any outside power. This means that a good resolution that impels a person to fulfil his responsibility before Allah must be entrenched in good intentions. These intentions guarantee the freedom of opinion and belief that resides within the impregnable fortress of self. This freedom protects the real character of a man, which derives from his cherished sacred principles and true beliefs. By understanding and following this psychological or inner mode of behavior, a Muslim is able to achieve two things. He can: 1) hold fast to the strong unbreakable rope of Allah and 2) preserve his freedom of choice and abide by his cherished beliefs.

Both the Qur'an and the *sunnah* clarify and affirm this fact. The Qur'an says: "Allah condemns whoever denies Allah, after having once believed, except one who is forced thereto while his heart remains true to his faith."[269]

Commenting on this verse Ibn Kathir says: "The person who is excepted here is the one who utters unbelief under duress because of beatings or other harm at the hands of the polytheists, while his heart remains firm of Faith in Allah and His Prophet."

Al-Awfi relates from Ibn Abbas that he said, "This verse was revealed about 'Ammar ibn Yasser who was persecuted and threatened with torture unless he blasphemed against the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and denied belief in him. So he was forced to do what they told him. Then he came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and apologized to him. At this the above verse was revealed." Al-Shabi, Qatadah, and Abu Malik, are also of the same view. Ibn Jarir says, "We have been told by Ibn Abdul 'Ala that Muhammad ibn Thawr told him that Mu'ammar said that he was told by Abdul Karim Al Jazri that Abi Obaide Muhammad ibn 'Ammar ibn Yasser said, 'The polytheists kept torturing 'Ammar ibn Yasser until he had to say what they wanted him to say. Then he came and complained to the Prophet, peace be upon him, about it. The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked, 'How do you find your heart.?' Ammar answered: 'Well pleased with faith.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, told him, 'You may repeat it (i.e. tell them again what you told them before).'"

Al Baihaqi has narrated the same hadith and given some more details. According to him, 'Ammar abused the Prophet, peace be upon

[269]Qur'an 16:106

him, and praised their gods. Then he complained about this to the Prophet, peace be upon him, saying: "O Messenger of Allah, they did not leave me until I abused you and talked favorably of their gods." The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked, "How do you find your heart?" Ammar said, "(I find it) content with faith." The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "If they repeat (the torture) you may also repeat (what you told them before)." It was about this that the verse was revealed: "... whoever denies Allah after having believed, except one who is forced thereto while his heart remains true to his faith."

This is how 'Ammar was saved by his good intention in this difficult situation. This helped him save three extremely important things. Varying in degrees of importance, they are: 1) the pleasure of Allah, the Exalted, which 'Ammar was able to achieve by his good intention; 2) his true faith, beliefs, and freedom of opinion; and 3) his body and soul from torture by hiding his true intention and beliefs so that he could survive this difficult period by the Will of Allah in order to serve the cause of Islam during the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his four rightly guided caliphs, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Both the Quran and the *sunnah* agree that by making good use of intention, a person can protect and preserve his belief from aggression. That is why intention is considered a most important factor in protecting freedom of belief during times of persecution and great calamities. On the contrary, those who are unable to do so suffer a sort of moral and spiritual breakdown and are utterly lost, no longer free to choose their beliefs. There is no defeat more serious and severe than credal defeat. One's hidden intention, however, with the help of Allah, is able to prevent this evil consequence, especially if a Muslim is eager to keep his intention alive and ever fresh in his mind until he is able to overcome the opposing forces that obstruct his way and mercilessly and constantly battle against his faith and righteousness. The Qur'an has drawn our attention to this conflict in these words: "In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Alif-Lam-Mim. Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, 'We believe,' and that they will not be tested?"[270]

A hadith says: "Prophets undergo the severest of tests among men, and the righteous people the next most severe. The more pious a man

[270] Qur'an 29:1-2

is, the more difficult his trial will be. If a man is firm in his faith his test is made that much more difficult for him."[271]

But no matter how difficult a test is, it cannot harm an invulnerable good intention embedded in strong faith in Allah, a great love for the Prophet, peace be upon him, and righteous people, and an abhorrence of evil. All such sacred beliefs can thus be preserved from exposure to outside aggression and desecration.

"So lose not heart, nor fall into despair, for you must gain mastery if you are true in faith. If a wound has touched you, you may be sure a similar wound has touched others. Such days of (varying fortunes) We give to men and women by turns, so that Allah may know those that He may take to Himself from your ranks as martyr-witnesses (to truth). And Allah loves not those who do wrong. Allah's object is also to purge those true in faith and to deprive of blessing those who resist faith."[272]

In order to gain these benefits of intention, one should continually exercise his intention before every single act one undertakes. All through his life a Muslim makes a specific intention in submission to Allah each time he stands in worship, makes ablution, offers prayers, gives alms, visits his relatives, parents, neighbours or friends, visits the sick, earns a livelihood, performs a pilgrimage, looks after children, is gentle to his spouse, makes peace between members of a family, is generous to those who are defenseless and unrepresented, enjoins good and forbids evil, removes harmful things from a public path, observes fasting, helps the needy, lends to others (without interest), participates in the funeral of a Muslim, or in any way observes and abides by the general rules of good behavior and social relationships. When repeated endlessly all these good qualities become an integral part of one's personality so that gradually and steadily one reverts to one's original nature and is ready to cooperate with others in a spirit of mutual understanding, appreciation, and love, and thus comes to respect his own as well as others' freedom and integrity.

One of the marvels of this aspect of Allah's creation regarding intention is that when a Muslim consciously and carefully abides by the guidance of Allah and follows the teachings of His Prophet,

[271] *Tafsir Ibn Kathir,* commentary on the opening part of Surah *al-Ankabut.* It is a sound hadith.

[272] Qur'an 3:139-141

Muhammad, peace be upon him, in due course of time this attitude slowly and gradually becomes a part of his character, which further deepens his insight and understanding. This in turn activates his intellect, because it forces him repeatedly and constantly to focus his thoughts on objectives. This oft-repeated intellectual process involving the repeated use of one's conscious mind and understanding in pursuit of goals in submission to Allah emerges at once as the cause as well as the result of any action, because the close relationship between a person's understanding and his freedom of choice and action is genuine and very real; in fact, they are interdependent.

A Muslim equipped with such an outlook by constant adherence to Islamic guidance, detests impulsive action and behavior revealing a lack of any sense of responsibility or purpose behind them.

The ability to rise above the purely impulsive level of behaviour and to regulate one's instinctive drives is in itself a great achievement as a step towards the freedom that enables people to make their own decisions in the light of their best interests. This is the most important and critical element in spiritual, moral and material development.

II. *Developing the Freedom of Social Solidarity*

If this phenomenon of human individual behavior is extended in practice to include a community or a major part of it, the people as a whole enjoy freedom, because in such a community of believers all are alive to their sense of responsibility in whatever they do or say. In a truly Islamic community freedom flourishes and it rightfully occupies a seat of honor and respect in the comity of nations.

If the majority of a community behaves in this manner, and if their intentions are pure and their actions clear, and if they follow the guidance of Islam sincerely and truly an important and immediate social dividend is achievement of harmony within the community. This harmony promotes further mutual understanding among the various sections of the community, between young and old, men and women, the rulers and the ruled, and the rich and the poor. One of the effects of good intentions is that they tend to unite and bring together people of various kinds, classes, interests, and inclinations to address and solve the common problems of society in the pursuit of justice. These are some of the functions of intention

that promote a spirit of morally-based equality, fraternity and liberty in the community as a whole.

The procedure adopted by the *sunnah* to develop and secure good intentions for every action has a direct impact on individuals and is extremely beneficial in promoting their interests and freedoms, and in improving their understanding, reasoning, and behavior. The resulting solidarity helps promote the collective welfare of the Muslim community by enabling it to stockpile its resources and coordinate its programs. By promoting harmony among its various sections it facilitates mutual cooperation and agreement.

The distorted and mutilated forms of the Islamic community that we witness these days under the label "Islamic Nations" cannot be considered Islamic, for unless they stick sincerely to the program that was originally given to the community of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, they have no rightful claim to be a part of the great community of believers of which the Qur'an speaks. Islam is by no means responsible for the present mistakes, humiliation, poverty, and disunity of these people, nor is it accountable for their dissipation, licentiousness, or subjugation to their enemies. These tragedies come not because of Islam but because these societies have strayed away from Islam. To return them to the fold of Islam through wisdom and beautiful preaching is a great hope and a noble aim and worthy of every possible effort and sacrifice.

III. *Some Ahadith About Intention*

The important teachings of Islam about intention are brought out in seven groups of hadith:

1) All human activities should have noble intentions. Imam Bukhari relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Actions will be judged by their intentions, and a man shall be treated according to his intentions. So whoever emigrates in pursuit of worldly acquisitions or to contract marriage will have his emigration treated accordingly."[273]

2) In order to exhort a Muslim to stick to the righteous path by preserving the purity of his heart and intentions when he is unable to

[273]Bukhari

change evil by physical force or word of mouth, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "If you come across some evil, try to change it with your hand; if this is beyond your power, try to change it by your tongue: and if even this is not possible, then change it with your heart, but this is the lowest degree of faith."[274]

3) In order to impress upon Muslims the need to purify their intentions by seeking nothing but the pleasure of Allah, a hadith related by Bukhari from Abu Musa says, "A man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and asked him: 'O Prophet of Allah! Whose fighting is for the cause of Allah, for some of us fight to appease their anger or defend their honor?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, raised his head, because the man was standing and answered, 'He who fights so that the word of Allah may prevail, his fighting is for the cause of Allah, the Exalted, the Supreme.'"[275]

Abu Hurairah narrates that a man once came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, "O Messenger of Allah! What do you say about a man who wants to fight for the cause of Allah, but also desires worldly gains?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, answered, "Such a man shall have no reward from Allah." The people found it very hard. So they asked the man to go and ask the Prophet, peace be upon him, again, saying he might not have understood his question. The man (went) and repeated his question, "O Prophet of Allah, what about the man who wants to fight for the cause of Allah but also desires worldly gains?" He replied, "He shall have no reward (from Allah)." The people found it very hard, and they asked the man a third time to go and ask the Prophet once more. Again he replied: "Such a person shall have no reward from Allah."[276]

Both Abu Dawud and Nasa'i relate from Abu Amamah that he said, "A man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and asked him, 'What about the reward of a man who fights in the cause of Allah seeking reward (from Allah) as well as personal fame (for bravery)?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'He shall have nothing.'"

The man asked the Prophet thrice, and each time he replied, "He

[274] Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Daw'ud, Tirmidhi, Nasa'i and Ibn Masud.
[275] Bukhari & Muslim
[276] Abu Dawood, *Sahih* of Ibn Habban and Al-Hakim, referred to by Hayat al-Sahaba vol.1, 508.

shall have nothing." Then he added, "Verily Allah does not accept any deed unless it is done purely for His pleasure."[277]

Tirmidhi relates from Al-Walid ibn Abi Uthman Al-Mada'ini that Aqabah ibn Muslim said that Shafiya Al-Asbahi told him that once when he entered Madinah he saw a man surrounded by people. He asked, "Who is he?" The people said, "He is Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him." Then he said, "I went near him until I sat in front of him while he (Abu Hurairah) was relating hadith to the people. When he finished and was alone, I said to him, 'May I ask you in truth what you have heard and understood of the hadith of the Prophet, peace be upon him, Abu Hurairah said, 'Do so. I shall narrate to you a hadith of the Prophet, Peace be on him, as I know and understand it.' Then Abu Hurairah coughed, and when he recovered he said, 'I shall narrate to you a hadith which I heard from the Prophet, peace be on him, in this very house.' There was no one else besides us present there."

Then he said, "The Prophet, peace be on upon him, said to me: 'On the day of judgement, Allah, the Exalted, shall come down to his servants to decide among them while all communities shall be kneeling down to him. The first among those to be called shall be a man who had learned the Qur'an, and a man who was rich, and a man who was killed for the cause of Allah. Allah shall say to the reciter of the Qur'an, "Didn't I teach you what I revealed to My Messenger?" He shall answer, "Yes, my Lord." "What did you do with what you had learned?" he shall be asked by Allah. "I recited it day and night." Then Allah will say to him, "You are a liar." The angels will also say that he is a liar. Then Allah will say to him, "You only wanted people to say that you are a great scholar of the Qur'an, and this you have already gained." Then the rich man shall be brought, and Allah shall say to him, "Didn't I give you so much that you had no need thereafter to ask anybody." "Yes, my Lord." "What did you then do with it?" "I was kind to my relatives and I gave alms to the poor." Allah will say, "You are telling a lie." The angels will also say that he is a liar. Allah will say: "You only wanted people to say you are a generous man, and this has already been said." Then the man who was killed for the cause of Allah will be brought forth. Allah will say to him: "How were you killed? The

[277] *Al-Targhib wal Tarhib*, vol.2, 421.

man will say: "I was ordered to fight for Your cause, so I fought until I was killed. Allah will say "You are telling a lie." The angels will also say he is a liar. Then Allah will say, "You only wanted people to say that you are a brave man, and that has already been said (by them)."'[278] Then the Propet, peace be upon him, struck me on the knee and said, 'These three people will be the first to enter Hell on the Day of Judgement.'"[279]

Al-Walid Abu Uthman Al-Mada'ini says that Aqabah told him that Shafiah was the man who went to see Muawiyyah and narrated the above hadith. Ala' ibn Abi Hakim who was an executioner with Muawiyyah says that a man came to Muawiyyah and told him about this hadith of Abu Hurairah. Thereupon Muawiyyah said, "If this is how these will be treated then what about the rest of the people?" Then he wept until we thought he would die, and we said, "This man has brought us this misfortune." After a while he recovered and dried his face and said,[280] "True indeed are the words of Allah and His Messenger, peace be on him, 'whoever desires the present life and its adornment, We will fully repay them for their works in this (life) and they shall not be wronged therein. Those are they who shall have nothing in the Hereafter except the fire; and what they wrought in this (life) shall come to naught: and vain shall be what they used to do'" (Qur'an 11:15-16).

4) Islam stresses the value of purity of intention and motivation and the need to cultivate this virtue in one's everyday life, and the *sunnah* gives us a practical policy of precaution to regulate our life and worship in order to preserve the purity and clarity of intent. This is obvious from the following ahadith:

Abu Hurairah relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Don't fast the last day or two preceding Ramadan, but if someone is used to fasting then he might fast."[281]

This prohibition of fasting immediately before the month of Ramadan is by way of a precaution, lest a man be uncertain whether he is fasting in Sha'ban or Ramadan. The hesitant attitude that results from this uncertainty is a sign of weakness.

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[278] Muslim: chapter on jihad and leadership; see also Tirmidhi.

[279] Muslim, on jihad and leadership; see also Tirmidhi, vol.2, p.61.

[280] Tirmidhi says it is a sound but rare hadith; also see *Al-Targhib* (Al-Mandhri), vol. 1, 38, and the book *Hayat al Sahaba*, vol. 3, p. 192-194.

[281] *Tuhfatul Ahudhi*, vol. 3, p. 365. Tirmidhi says it is a sound hadith.

Through this prohibition Islam seeks to remove any hesitation and confusion. A man's intention must be clear and well-defined in anything through which he seeks the pleasure of Allah. Hesitation and confusion evince weakness, and Islam is against all kinds of weakness. It remedies this weakness by prohibiting a Muslim from fasting on a day when he may be hesitant or unclear about his intention. In such a case it would prefer that a Muslim should break his fast rather than keep it with an uncertain and hesitant mind.

The last words of the hadith say that a Muslim may fast on this day if he customarily fasts, even if he is not sure if it is Sha'ban or the month of Ramadan, because his intention is quite clear and he is sure that he is fasting voluntarily or for some other non-obligatory reason.

The probability of a particular day being part of Ramadan may be quite strong, but still the *sunnah* recommends that it should not be observed as a day of fasting. This illustrates how clear the *sunnah* is on this point. It also gives the remedy which is in complete accord with Allah's law. Thus those who fast on a doubtful day, like the people granted permission in the above hadith as well as those who though unsure fast on such a day as a precautionary measure, are required to fast another day to make up for it when later on it proves to be the first of Ramadan.

This means that he who fasts on a doubtful day would not be rewarded for it because of his hesitation and the lack of purity of his intention. In short, it is preferable not to fast that day even if it is proved later on to be the first of Ramadan. This explains why the Prophet's companions would be annoyed with those who ignored this principle and fasted on a doubtful day. They considered it an act of disobedience.

Tirmidhi relates from Ibn Zafar that he said, "We were with 'Ammar ibn Yasir, who brought some roasted meat, and asked them to eat. Some of them apologized saying they were fasting. 'Ammar ibn Yasir said, 'He who fasts on a doubtful day, disobeys Abul Qasim (i.e., the Prophet, peace be on him).'"[282]

Allah, the Exalted, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught us we should satisfy our needs before we proceed to offer our prayers. This is so for it frees from distractions a Muslim's mind

[282] Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Haban, Ibn Khuzaimah.

when engaged in worship, and thus promotes the purification of motives and intentions, which is a primary aim of both the Qur'an and the *sunnah*.

Ibn 'Umar narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "If you are busy eating, don't hurry but eat until you have had enough, even if the congregational prayer starts."[283]

Ai'sha narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "A man should not pray when the food is served, nor while he is striving to suppress the urine and ordure."[284] It is obvious that the prohibition of praying while preoccupied with something else rests on the fact that in such a case one cannot give one's full attention to prayers. One's intention cannot be pure and undivided if one has other things on one's mind while praying.

In a hadith from Abu Darda, Bukhari says, "It is a sign of a man's understanding and insight (in *din*) that he should satisfy his needs first so that he may concentrate on his prayers thereafter." Anas narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "If meals are brought, then eat before offering Maghrib,[285] and do not put it off until you finish your prayers."[286]

Ai'sha narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "If the time of prayers comes and your dinner is ready, start with your dinner."[287]

Ibn 'Umar narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "If you sit down for dinner and it is the time for prayers, start with your dinner and do not hurry until you have had it."[288]

These ahadith are only a few examples that illustrate an essential and consistent teaching of Islam that one should confront and completely reject any weakness of will and confusion of motives.

In the *sunnah* we also find many directives concerning confusion of will and hesitation during and after ablution. Some ahadith even prohibit repeating ablution unless the material evidence of hearing or smell necessitates it.

Similarly, all doubt must be removed concerning the number of

[283] Bukhari, *Nailal Awtar*, vol.3, p.177.
[284] Ahmad, Muslim, and Abu Dawud
[285] *Maghrib*, i.e., the prayer immediately after sunset.
[286] Bukhari and Muslim.
[287] Bukhari and Muslim.
[288] Bukhari and Muslim.

rakahs performed in *salah*. An action must be accomplished and not left undone or half done when one has made up one's mind and started it.

All such measures are meant to secure one 's will against all kinds of weakness or impurities so that one would have only one end in view, namely, "Allah's pleasure and subservience to His command." This is essential for building a really strong will and determined soul. True indeed are the words of Allah, "Allah has not made for any man two hearts."[289]

5) Intention has a hidden power and unfathomed depths beyond the control of any human power. The intention of a person cannot be known to anyone else, because only Allah knows its secrets. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "I have been commanded to fight people (who actively oppose Islam) until they say, 'There is no god but Allah.' If they say it and observe our prayers, and turn their faces toward our *qibla*, and follow our ways of slaughtering animals, then their lives and properties will be safe from us, and their accountability rests with Allah."[290]

This hadith gives us a clear principle laid down by Islam respecting the intention of man, namely, that we should judge people by appearance only and leave the rest to Allah, the Exalted, Who alone knows all secrets and hidden intentions.

6) If one has good intentions, one is sure to obtain their reward even if one is prevented from carrying out these good intentions in practice.

Bukhari relates that while on one of the military expeditions the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "There are some people who have stayed behind in Medina and have not joined our expedition, yet they will be rewarded in the same way as we, for they are prevented from joining us by valid reasons."[291]

Another hadith says, "Whoever sincerely prays to Allah for martyrdom shall be ranked by Allah as one of the martyrs, even if he dies a natural death."[292]

Abu Kabshah Al-Ansari relates that he heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say, "I swear to the (truth) of these three things: Giving alms does not diminish a person's wealth; Allah increases

[289] Qur'an 33:4
[290] Bukhari
[291] Bukhari
[292] Tirmidhi

and raises in honor whoever is wronged and bears it patiently; and whoever helps somebody in need will be helped by Allah when he is in need (the narrator is not sure whether he used these words or some other similar words). I shall narrate a hadith to you, so learn it by heart, 'There are four kinds of people in this world. First, a person to whom Allah has given both wealth and knowledge, and he fears Allah and helps his relatives and knows that Allah, the Exalted, has a share (in his wealth and knowledge and so he helps others too). This person is in the highest and best position. Second, a person who has knowledge but no wealth, and he has sincere intentions and says, "If I had money, I should do the same thing as so and so does with his money." Both persons will have a similar reward. Third, a person who has wealth but has no knowledge, and he squanders his money as he likes, and neither fears Allah nor helps his relatives nor acknowledges that Allah has a share in his wealth. This person is in the worst position. And last, a person who has neither money nor knowledge, but says to himself, "If I had money, I would do the same things as so and so does with it." Both of them will get a similar punishment."[293]

Another hadith related by Abu Dawud says, "If a person intends to pray at night but is overcome by sleep, he will be rewarded for it and his sleep will be considered as a gift to him (from Allah)."[294] Al-Hakim has also reported this hadith in almost identical words.[295]

Abdullah ibn 'Umar as narrated by Imam Ahmad, relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "If anyone suffers from any illness in his body, Allah, the Exalted, says to the angels who guard him, 'Record for (this) servant of Mine every day and night whatever good deeds he might have done had he been free from this illness.'"[296]

Abu Hurairah says, "Once a man intended to give alms. He went out but gave it (unknowingly) to a thief. The people talked about this saying, 'He has given his charity to a thief.' The man thanked Allah and said, 'I shall again go and give alms (to a deserving person).' So he went, but this time gave it to an adulteress. The people said, 'Lo! He

[293] Tirmidhi, who describes it as a sound hadith.

[294] *Muwatta* of Imam Malik, Nasa'i, and Al-Baihaqi (the words of the hadith are similar to that reported by Abu Dawud).

[295] *Kitab Al-Manhal Al-Azabil Mawrud*, commentary on Abu Dawud, vol. 7, p.239.

[296] Al-Mandhri has quoted it on the authority of Ahmad; Al-Hakim also refers to it and says it is a sound hadith according to him and Al-Mandhri (*Al-Fathal Rabbani Li Tarteebil Musnad*, by Shaikh Al-Sa'ati, vol. 5, pp. 144-145).

has tonight given his money to an adulteress.' The man again thanked Allah, and determined to try once more. This time he gave the alms to a rich man. The people said: 'Lo, he has given money to a rich man.' The man, however, thanked Allah for an adulteress, a thief, and a rich man. When he died he was told 'Your alms-giving has been well-accepted by Allah, for it may induce the adulteress to give up adultery, and the thief to give up his stealing, and it may also teach a lesson to the rich man and induce him to spend out of what Allah has given him.''' [297]

Anas narrates that a man once said to the Prophet, peace be upon him, "If I pay the *zakat* to your messenger then would I, in the sight of Allah and His Messenger, have nothing more to pay?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Yes, when you have paid it to my messenger then you would have done your duty towards Allah and His Messenger. You shall get your reward for it, and the sin will be upon him who (unlawfully) changes it." [298]

Abu Sa'id narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, told (them), "There was among those before you a man who had killed ninety-nine people. He asked how he might find the most learned man on earth. The people told him about a certain monk. He went to him and told him he had killed ninety-nine people, and then asked him if there was any hope of forgiveness (by Allah) for his sins. The monk said, 'No.' The man killed the monk and thus the number of those whom he had killed became one hundred. He again asked about the most learned man on earth. The people told him about a scholar. The man went and told him he had killed one hundred people and asked him if there was any hope of his being forgiven. The wise man replied in the affirmative and said, 'Who can stand in the way of your forgiveness? Go to such and such place. There you will find people worshipping Allah. Join them in their prayers and don't return to your homeland for it is a land of evil.' The man set out to this place, but died when he was half way to his destination. So the angels of mercy and the angels of chastisement disputed among themselves regarding him. The angels of mercy said, 'He came repentent to Allah, and so Allah will accept him.' The angels of chastisement said, 'He never did any good.' An angel

[297] Bukhari and Muslim; also refer to Al-Tabrani *Nail Al-Awtar* by Al-Shukani, vol. 4, p. 173.
[298] Ibid.

then came to them in the form of a human being. They made him an arbitrator in the case. So he said, 'Measure the distance between his homeland and the land where he wanted to go. Whichever of these two places he is nearer to, he belongs to it.' When they measured the distance they found that he was nearer the place to which he was going, so the angels of mercy took him." [299] Such is the reward a Muslim receives for actions undone when he intends good but cannot actually do it for some valid reason.

7) Intention has another important function, which is similar but even more important. What people may regard as worldly or recreational activities may be transformed by it into acts of worship. Those who have good intentions may receive the greatest rewards from these activities in addition to the pleasure they may derive from them. Life, for them, becomes one large place of worship where Allah can be adored through all forms of human activity, even those related to purely physical pleasures like eating, drinking, sports, or physical needs like sleep, sex, adornment, or dress.

Through concentration on one's intention all these actions can be turned into deeds that please Allah and win His reward. When a Muslim gets used to such a beautiful pattern of life, he feels quite secure with Allah, the Exalted, for when Allah is with him, blessing him, and looking after him, what on earth could frighten or worry him? The resultant inner emotional freedom significantly affects one's behavior, and gives one the freedom to do what is best for oneself and for the community. Such a person rightly feels so content and confident that he willingly accepts what Allah has chosen for him, and becomes one of those with whom Allah is well pleased and who are well pleased with Him.

The following hadith underlines this in very clear words: "For whatever you spend for Allah's sake you will be rewarded, even for the morsel of food you may put in your wife 's mouth." [300] Bukhari relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "When a person spends on his family as a means of pleasing Allah, then it shall be regarded as a charity from him (and he shall be rewarded for it.)" [301]

Consider the picture of married life as portrayed in the first hadith. What do these two ahadith say about the purity of intention necessary

[299] Bukhari and Muslim
[300] Bukhari and Muslim
[301] Bukhari

for any reward from Allah. Both of the ahadith stress the condition that the action or the deed be for the sake of Allah and to win His pleasure.

The circumstances of good intentions that are compatible with pleasure and yet are rewarded by Allah are quite numerous, as are also the relevant ahadith. In all these cases, proper intention strengthens the will, guides human will to the straight path, and in every possible way develops spiritual and material values and defines the appropriate responsibilities.

Chapter Two

Independence of Personality

I. *Independence of Belief and Morals*

The Qur'an delineates a practical program for developing a sense of responsibility and for better use of human freedom and free will.

First and foremost, the Qur'an calls upon man to be and believe as a person free from any hereditory or environmental influences. Each individual must form his own opinion independently and believe in the truth. His decision in this regard should not be affected by his parents and forefathers or by social habits and customs. Each man must decide for himself. The Qur'an states: "When it is said to them, 'Come to what Allah has revealed; come to the Messenger,' they say, 'Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following.' What! Even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance."[302]

Even though the Qur'an often admonishes us to fulfill our duties toward our parents, it warns us not to follow them blindly and describes some parents in this verse as ignorant and astray. The Qur'an gives this warning because it insists that every man must carefully and independently decide about his own beliefs, and should not be carried away by a blind love for his forefathers or their ways of life. If the parents are wrong, astray, or ignorant, their children should be free to choose what is right and to reject their parents' false dogmas.

The Qur'an's account of Allah's wisdom bestowed on Luqman strikes a balance between the rights of parents and the demands of their children as free individuals: "But if they (i.e., your parents) strive to make you join in worship with Me things of which you have no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love). In the end, the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you all that you did."[303]

Even the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself, who is dearer to believers than their ownselves or their parents, was ordered by his Lord to tell all men, "Now have come to you, from your Lord, proofs (to open your eyes). If any will see, it will be for (the good of) his own

[302] Qur'an 5:107
[303] Qur'an 31:15

soul; if any will be blind, it will be to his own (harm). I am not (here) to watch over your doings.''[304] The Qur'an demands that the believers preserve their identity and be quite distinct from unbelievers and the guilty. Allah exhorts the Prophet, ''Say: 'O you that reject faith! I worship not that which you worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have been wont to worship, nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your way and to me mine.''[305]

Reiteration here shows an emphasis on independence and distinctness. And of course what is addressed to the Prophet, peace be upon him, is also addressed to his followers.

At one place in the Qur'an we read, ''Say: 'You shall not be questioned as to our sins, nor shall we be questioned as to what you do.''' [306] The disbelievers or those who go astray are not the only ones treated in this manner. Indeed, it is true and applicable to the entire community. When a community deviates and goes astray, a believer should not hesitate to resist it by keeping himself aloof. In fact Islam seeks to protect every individual Muslim and every Muslim family by protecting their personal independence. It warns them against losing their identity and freedom by blindly following others in their evil practices. Possession of an independent character and personality is a necessary prerequisite for the liberation of a believer from the bondage and influence of the material environment.

A hadith from Abu Bakr explains the Qur'anic verse that stresses the need of self-protection against the bad influence of others. Explicit and clear as the Qur'anic text is on this point, still some people misinterpret it, which makes it necessary to understand its correct interpretation. Abu Bakr said in a speech, '' O People, you recite the verse, 'O you who believe! Guard your own souls. If you follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray,'[307] but you misinterpret it. I've heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, say: 'If the people see an evil and yet they do not try to change it, Allah, the Exalted, shall soon punish them all for it.'''[308]

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[304] Qur'an 6:104
[305] Qur'an 109:1-6.
[306] Qur'an 34:25
[307] Qur'an 5:108
[308] Ahmad, *Sunan,* and Ibn Majah

We notice here that Abu Bakr Al-Sidiq when citing this hadith was not content to say that a Muslim should keep aloof from social evils but rather insists that he should stand up and fight against them. This indicates not mere freedom from shackles of bondage, but goes a step beyond and represents a path followed by all people of firm purpose and strong will.

The meaning of the above Qur'anic verse and its emphasis on maintaining one's independent identity and character is further brought out by Tirmidhi, who relates that Abi Ummayah Al-Shaibani said, "I went to Abu Thalabah Al-Khashni and asked him, 'What do you say about this verse?' 'Which verse?' he replied. I said, 'the words of Allah: "O you who believe! Guard your own souls. If you follow (right) guidance, no hurt can come to you from those who stray."' He said, 'By Allah, I asked about it one who knew. I asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, whereupon he said, "Nay, you must enjoin good and forbid evil, but if you find that every one is steeped in greed, love of worldly life, and arrogance, and follows his own lusts, then guard your ownself, and leave the others alone. There will come a time when a steadfast person will feel as if he were holding burning embers (in his hands). And he who shall continue to do good in such a situation shall be rewarded fifty times more than you."'"[309]

Thus a Muslim has three options, all of which evidence his distinct identity and freedom of choice and action. The first of these requires a Muslim actively to strive to change evil. This is an onerous but necessary duty and must be performed by men of strong will. When a Muslim finds himself unable to change the condition of the society, the second option permits him to live apart from the society and guard his ownself.

The third option, when it is impossible to reform society, calls for a Muslim, not to keep aloof from society but to continue to enjoin good and forbid evil. This undoubtedly is the best and the noblest of tasks, because the severity, sufferings, and the patient perseverance of these people truly merit the best of rewards.

Being independent in choosing one's way of life and program of action also requires one to bear responsibility for one's actions and behavior as shown in the following Qur'anic verses.

> Could you but see when the wrongdoers will be made to stand before their Lord, throwing back the word (of blame)

[309]Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud, and Ibn Majah

on one another! Those who were deemed weak will say to those who were arrogant, "Had it not been for you, we would certainly have been believers!" And those who were arrogant will say to those who were deemed weak, "Did we keep you back from guidance after it reached you? Nay, but you were criminals."[310]

Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul; whoever works evil, it is against his own soul: nor is your Lord ever unjust (in the least) to His servants.[311]

O mankind! Do your duty to your Lord, and fear (the coming of) a Day when no father can avail aught for his son, nor a son avail aught for his father. Verily the promise of Allah is true; let not then this present life deceive you, nor let the chief Deceiver deceive you about Allah.[312]

That Day shall a man flee from his own brother, and from his mother and his father, and from his wife and his children. Each one of them, that day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to the others.[313]

Every man's fate We have fastened on his own neck; on the day of judgement We shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open. (It will be said to him) "Read your (own) record: sufficient is your soul this day to make out an account against you." Whoever receives guidance, receives it for his own benefit, whoever goes astray does so to his own loss; no bearer of burden can bear the burden of another. Moreover, We would never chastise (any community of people for the wrong they may do) before We had sent a Messenger (to give warning).[314]

They will be marshalled before Allah together. Then will the weak say to those who were arrogant, "Verily, we were following you; can you then avail us at all against the wrath of Allah?" They will reply, "If we had received the guidance of Allah, we should have given it to you; to us it makes no difference (now) whether we rage or bear (these torments) with patience. For ourselves there is no way of escape."[315]

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[310] Qur'an 34:31-32
[311] Qur'an 41:46
[312] Qur'an 31:33
[313] Qur'an 80:34-35
[314] Qur'an 17:13-15
[315] Qur'an 14:21

> Then would those who are followed clear themselves of those who follow (them). They would see the torment, and all relations between them would be cut off.[316]
>
> He will say, "Enter together with the people who passed away before you, men and jinns, into the fire." Every time a new people enters, it curses its sister-people (that went before) until they follow each other, all into the fire. The last says about the first, "Our Lord! It is these that misled us; so give them a double penalty in the fire." He will say, "Each of you deserves double suffering (for your sins and for misleading others)," but this you do not understand. Then the first will say to the last, "See then! No advantage do you have over us; so taste the penalty for all that you did."[317]
>
> And Satan will say when the matter is decided: "It was Allah who gave you a promise of truth. I too promised, but I failed in my promise to you. I had no authority over you except to call you, but you listened to me. Then do not reproach me but reproach your own souls. I cannot listen to your cries, nor can you listen to mine."[318]

II. *Independence as the Basis of Freedom and Accountability*

The *sunnah* underlines some of the most important means to fully establish a Muslim's freedom of choice. It seeks to free him completely from all sorts of bondage, whether to history, economic circumstances, or social and family ties.

The basic rule in this regard is that every Muslim is responsible for abiding by the Islamic law. This responsibility he bears individually regardless of whether the community abides by it or not, and nothing along his path toward what is good may deter him from striving for his goal.

The key point here is the ability of a person to bear his responsibilities independently. This strengthens his freedom, which is the most important aspect of responsibility both for self-development of an individual and for the development of the community.

The ahadith concerning this point are quite clear and are also supported by a great number of equally explicit Qur'anic verses.

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[316] Qur'an 2:166
[317] Qur'an 7:38-39
[318] Qur'an 14:22

Bukhari narrates from 'Aisha, that she said, "The Quraish were very much concerned about a certain woman from the tribe of Makhzoum who had committed theft. They said, 'Nobody can speak (in favor of the woman) to Allah's Messenger, peace be on him, and nobody dares do that except Usamah who was the favourite of Allah's Messenger. When Usamah spoke to the Prophet, peace be upon him, about the matter, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'Are you interceding (with me) in order to violate one of the legal punishments laid down by Allah?' Then he got up and addressed the people, saying, 'O people! The nations before you went astray because, if one of their nobles committed theft, they used to let him go, but if a weak person among them committed it, they inflicted the legal punishment on him. By Allah, if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad committed theft, Muhammad would cut off her hand.'"[319]

This hadith seems clear and easy to understand, but for two reasons people have failed to grasp its full significance. First, it is so often and commonly cited that it has become something of a cliche. It is taken for granted and few bother to ponder over its deeper implications. And second, the point of the hadith is so obvious that many find no need for further and deeper consideration of its meaning. This hadith is particularly enlightening because it gives us a precise and a deeper meaning of responsibility in Islam. Three points can be made in explication:

(1) According to the usual Arab convention of the time, it was incumbent upon everyone to extend a helping hand and protection to any person asking for his help and protection without asking about the fairness or justice of the person's position and despite all the hazards and risks such help might involve. They would offer such protection as a point of honor, even if the person seeking their favour was a complete stranger to them. From this we can imagine how much more serious and urgent the situation would be when the person in need of help and support happened to be their own flesh and blood. Who can think of exercising any restraint in such an emotionally charged atmosphere, especially when a respectable woman of the family should be in danger of losing her repute and good name?

It is precisely this very mentality of these people that is alluded to in the Qur'anic verse, "... and when the female (infant) buried alive is questioned for what crime she was killed ..."[320] They used to kill their

[319] Bukhari and Muslim
[320] Qur'an 81:8-9

own daughters in their infancy for fear that they should bring shame or disgrace upon them in case they failed to protect their honor.

How hard the Prophet, peace be upon him, must have had to strive under these circumstances before he was able to change their outlook and make them accept the decision to cut the hand of the respectable woman of the Makhzum tribe in accordance with the Divine Law! This aspect of the matter is often overlooked when we read this hadith, though it is so obvious. We shall concentrate only on two sub-points, which are closely related to responsibility and freedom.

First, Muhammad, peace be upon him, whom Allah, the Exalted, wanted to be an example to all men, accepted and bore the burden of responsibility willingly and was absolutely unaffected by any negative influences, prejudices, false customs, and conventions, no matter how well-established and deep-rooted they were in the society. This hadith may help us understand how he was able to bring about radical change, because it shows that a man must be free of all external forces in his beliefs, opinions, and behavior before he is able to bring about any change or improvement in the life around him, which is, as we know, incumbent upon every Muslim. Second, by making the woman bear full responsibility for her action, the Prophet, peace be upon him, treated her as an independent person with definite responsibilities of her own and quite distinct from her tribe. In the eyes of the Prophet, peace be upon him, she alone was responsible and accountable for all her actions, whether good or bad. This strict treatment proved very beneficial and had a healthy effect on her character later on.

Bukhari has related a hadith on the authority of Arwah ibn al-Zubair which throws some light on her life after this incident, according to which, "She sincerely repented after this and got married. 'Aisha says that she used to come to the Prophet's house and she ('Aisha) used to give the Prophet, peace be upon him, her messages."[321] The correct treatment meted out to her helped her in repenting and reforming herself sincerely and earnestly.

Furthermore, she was quite welcome in the household of the Prophet, peace be upon him. She was quite close and intimate with his family. She loved them and they loved her, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself looked after and provided her with whatever

[321] Bukhari

she asked for. Her sincere repentance had purified her and restored her dignity as a free and responsible person of the community.

2) In the hadith, one of the dearest members of the Prophet's family, Fatimah, his favorite daughter, has been mentioned as an example for the whole of mankind. Undoubtedly he loved her dearly, but that could not stand in his way while enforcing the law of Allah. Through her example he sought to establish the principle of individual responsibility in the mind of every believer and every person, whether he be a judge or the accused, and in the thought and practice of every family, and of the community as a whole. The daughter of a ruler, however esteemed and chaste, is as much responsible and accountable for her deeds as any other ordinary member of the community, and she must bear the full consequences of her conduct if her guilt is proved in a court of law.

The Arabs had at that time only recently accepted Islam, and the old habits and customs of the Days of Ignorance were yet not completely forgotten. To make these people accept the new code of law was a marvelous achievement of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Fathers willingly submitted to the decision involving chopping off the hands of their own daughters. How did the Prophet, peace be upon him, convince them, and bring about this change? In the face of the opposition of the Arabs and the enormous struggle that the Prophet, peace be upon him, must have made to affect this miraculous revolution, his success can only derive from their appreciation and understanding of the deeper significance of individual responsibility and accountability. They understood that a father cannot be held accountable for the deeds of his child, nor a child be made to suffer for the guilt of his father. Each of them must account for their deeds and bear their consequences. The Divine Law must be enforced strictly and justly within the limits laid down by Allah.

(3) Finally this hadith draws our attention also to the important fact that even the great love the Prophet, peace be upon him, had for Usamah ibn Zaid could not in the least weaken his resolve to enforce the Divine Law. Usamah was extremely embarrassed after speaking to him, for he knew very well that though the Prophet, peace be upon him, held him very dear, his love for Allah and justice was far more intense than any other love, even the love for his dearest daughter Fatimah. There was no question of interceding in this case against truth and justice. Usamah also at once realized that he should not have

interceded, because his action endangered the essential basis of all equity and individual accountability.

By establishing law and order in this way, the Prophet, peace be upon him, brought the entire tribal society together into a moral community capable of accepting it, with the result that:

- Order and discipline replaced tribal customs and conventions and eliminated their barbarity and savagery;
- All people were now equal before the law, whether weak or strong, poor or rich;
- There was no longer any place for favoritism or any preferential treatment in this community, where the principle of justice and equity prevailed; and
- The sanctity of law was duly preserved and zealously guarded within this Islamic community, which abided by Allah's commandments and thereby maintained its own security and safety.

III. *Personal Responsibility at the Inception of Islam*

The tremendous impact of Usama's attempted intercession, and of other similar incidents, on the members of the Muslim community, both men and women, awakened them to the true meaning of individual responsibility and accountability. In the teachings of Islam, this individual responsibility is not a casual or a transitory phenomenon, but is in fact a fundamental principle. No man, no relative, not even one's father or son, can be accountable for any one else's actions. Every person must account for his or her own deeds and bear their consequences. The Revelation of the Qur'an enunciated this principle the very first day it addressed the Quraish and affirmed it consistently thereafter. We can trace the Islamic concepts of responsibility back to the very first day of Islam.

The attitude of the *sunnah* in this regard is quite clear and conclusive. It was clear from the day the Prophet, peace be upon him, started preaching the word of Allah, and remained so until the day Islamic governance was firmly established and the truth prevailed. Bukhari narrates on the authority of Ibn Abbas that when the verse, "And admonish your nearest kinsmen,"[322] was revealed, the Prophet, peace be upon him, started to invite their different tribes to Islam one

[322] Qur'an 26:214

by one. Another hadith also narrated by Bukhari but from a different source says that when the above verse was revealed the Prophet, peace be upon him, called out to these tribes, "O Children of Fahr, O Children of 'Adi, and O Tribes of Quraish." According to a yet another hadith narrated by Bukhari from Abu Hurairah the Prophet exhorted, "O Children of Abd Manaf! Ransom your souls from Allah. O Umm Zubbair, aunt of Allah's Messenger, and O Fatimah, daughter of Muhammad! Ransom your souls from Allah. I can avail you nothing before Allah. You may ask me to give the wealth that I possess, for that is all I can do for you."

These ahadith all relate to the Makkan period of the Prophet's life. This happened long before the incident involving the theft by the women of Bani Makhzum, for when her hand was cut off the Islamic government had already been established in Medina.

This time-gap between his first call to close members of his own family while yet in Makkah and the incident of the woman of Bani Makhzum underlines the following important points:

First, his mention of Fatimah at that time was not part of a tactical procedure adopted by the Prophet, peace be upon him, in order to persuade both Usamah and the woman's clan to surrender to Allah's law. The Prophet, peace be upon him, really meant what he said.

Second, citing Fatimah's name in the above context was nothing exceptional, for the Prophet, peace be upon him, had long ago enunciated the basic principle quite clearly while addressing his uncles, aunts, his dear daughter, and various tribes of the Quraish in the very initial phase of his mission. He had categorically told them that each one of them was individually accountable for his or her actions, and so each of them must fulfill his or her obligations: "Ransom your souls from Allah, for I can be of no avail to you before Allah."

Third, the Prophet's task in both of these cases, namely, of the woman of Bani Makhzum in Medina and of his kinsmen when he called them to Islam in Makkah, was difficult indeed. It was even more difficult at Makkah in the beginning of Islam when there was no Muslim community and the tribal customs and conventions were very strong in the Arabian society, because he sought to change their well established norms and traditions to something completely unknown to them. Nevertheless, the Prophet, peace be upon him, did not hesitate even for a moment and forthwith proclaimed to his kinsmen the principle of personal responsibility. He told them that they will all

be judged by Allah on the basis of their actual deeds. There is no exception to this general rule, and to emphasize this point he specifically mentions his own aunt and daughter. Like others, they too will have to account for their deeds in this world. The Arab convention, which presented men as defenders of their women folk and depicted them as heroes responsible for them, was in direct conflict with this new principle.

Fourth, the Prophet, peace be upon him, mentioned only Fatimah out of all of his daughters on this occasion, perhaps because she was the youngest who had the greatest claim to his love and care, and because she was unmarried at that time so she was all the more dear and near to him. But none of these considerations could benefit her if she failed to do her duty, nor could she be given any preferential treatment in the sight of Allah.

Fifth, the very fact that the Prophet, peace be upon him, in obedience to Allah's command, "And admonish your nearest kinsmen," warned his near and dear ones at the early stages of Islam to be mindful of their individual responsibilities underlines the importance of individual responsibility in Islam.

It represents the very core of the message of Islam, and the basis on which its edifice is raised. If this were not so, the Prophet, peace be upon him, could well have postponed it for some other opportune time in the future. The fact is that real social change can take place only through people fired with a deep sense of practical responsibility. It is these alone who can take the lead in any real fundamental social change and remove evil from society.

In short, all the above ahadith confirm that the concept of individual accountability is a necessary element of Islamic teachings on responsibility. In its absence, there can be no obligations and duties as Islam knows them. In this sense, accountability forms the very basis of human responsibility, and is an essential element in the Islamic concept of human freedom for choice and action. It is this freedom that provides the *sine qua none* for any human obligations and responsibilities.

IV. *Personal Independence of Character as the Key to Community Integrity*

A community whose individual members have strong, healthy and independent personalities cannot for long fail to feel their healthy effect. This is why Islam calls upon every Muslim family to give the

greatest care and attention to the proper training of its members in order to reinforce their commitment to Islam's eternal teachings and lend support and strengh to the community as a whole. Any weakness in an individual's character is bound to affect adversely the family, the nation and ultimately the entire Muslim Ummah and the entire world. This is why the Prophet, peace be upon him, warned us against losing our independent character and our separate identity as a distinct nation and Ummah.

Bukhari narrates from Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "You will follow those who were before you step by step and do exactly as they did so that if they had entered a lizard's hole you will likewise enter it." His companions asked, "O Messenger of Allah! Do you mean the Jews and the Christians?" He replied, "Who else?" Relating from Abu Hurairah, Bukhari states: "The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'The day of judgement will not come until my Ummah follows those who were before them step by step and does what they did before them.' He was asked, 'Do you mean the Persians and the Romans?' He replied, 'And who else?'"

These words of the Prophet, peace be upon him, emphasize the seriousness of maintaining a separate identity and the gravity of the danger to ummatic independence and hence the importance of warning against it. The Prophet's words portray a situation where the Muslim community is weak and so completely subservient to its enemies that if they enter a lizard's hole the Muslims would also follow them into it.

The danger against which the Prophet, peace be upon him, warned has in fact come true, which in itself is a miracle of his prophetic vision. Such subservience and blind imitation of others bespeaks an intellectual slavery to a people in whose presence they are simply unable to exercise their freedom of choice and action. Islam does not tolerate a situation where the free will of a whole people is paralyzed so they become mere carbon copies of others and thoughtlessly imitate foreign modes of thought and behavior. Nothing can illustrate this better than the present situation of the Muslim Ummah, which shows the importance and true significance of the Islamic program of action designed to preserve and secure freedom of opinion, creed, and action for the community in a natural way by emphasizing its freedom from all negative extraneous influences.

Chapter Three

Constant Prayer for Divine Help

There is no other worship like supplication in Islam. Muslims should learn more about its various facets in the light of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*.

Muslims generally regard supplication as merely certain words embodying their aspirations in this world and in the hereafter, for which they supplicate to their Lord and Creator and then wait for their fulfillment. Although this conception is an important feature of supplication, such delimition of its significance may weaken its effect by underestimating its real importance, disrupt many of its functions, and deprive us of their benefits, and the resulting confusion might endanger one's faith. Supplication is the core of worship. If it is affected by disease all other forms of worship may also be infected, which ultimately would jeopardize man's relationship with God.

Supplication, that is, constantly praying for divine help, is a composite and integrated process that has diverse aspects, of which the two most important are psychological, related to the human will, and physical, concerning behavior and action.

I. *The Psychological Elements*

Four elements constitute the psychological ingredients of supplication. These are:

1) The supplicant 's deep feeling of humility and utter need for help from Allah, the Exalted, to the extent of absolute surrender on his or her part before our Creator.

Allah says in the Qur'an: "Or, who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls On Him, and who relieves its sufferings, and makes you inheritors of the earth? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Little it is that you heed!"[323]

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Ask Allah for everything, even it be just a shoe-lace, for unless Allah provides it, we could not obtain it."[324]

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[323] Qur'an 27:62

[324] *Musnad* (Abu Ya'la). Al-Siyyuti has described it in his *Al-Jami 'Al-Saghir.* Al-Manawi, (in his *Faidhul Qadir,* observed that according to Al-Haithmi its chain of authorities is sound.

2) Confidence in Allah and trust that He always listens and answers the prayers of His servants: "When My servants ask you concerning Me, I am indeed close (to them). I listen to the prayer of every supplicant when he calls on Me; Let them also, with a will, listen to My call, and believe in Me so that they may walk in the right way."[325]

Another hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah says, "Allah, the Exalted, descends to the nearest heaven every night after a third of the night elapses and says, 'I am the King, whoever asks Me will be given, and whoever asks for forgiveness, will be forgiven.' And this continues until dawn."[326]

3) Respect for Allah, so that one can leave one's affairs in His Care. A person might desire something that might be harmful if it were granted to him. This helps keep a balance between various possibilities in life and man's expectations. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has told us that a sincere supplication is always fulfilled, or the supplicant is granted something better, or its reward is deferred to the hereafter, or he is spared some harm equivalent to the good he prays for in his supplication.

Allah says "... man (often) prays for things that are bad as if he were praying for something that is good, for man is prone to be hasty in his judgements."[327]

The Prophet, peace be upon him, says in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, "Allah says, 'I am just as My servant thinks I am.'"[328] Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq and 'Umar say that the Prophet, peace be on him, said, "Your supplications shall be answered provided you keep on praying with patience and do not lose heart or say things like 'I prayed but it was of no avail.'"

4) Freedom from spite or ill-will, whether toward oneself or toward others. Muslim reports from Abu Hurairah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "A servant of Allah will be granted whatever he supplicates for, unless his supplication involves something bad for himself or his relatives, or unless he panics." Somebody asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, "And what is panic?" The Prophet,

[325] Qur'an 2:186
[326] A hadith reported by the Imams of sunnah besides Tirmidhi.
[327] Qur'an 17:11
[328] Bukhari, Kitab al-Tawhid

peace be upon him, answered, "And then he gets tired and stops supplicating."[329]

Ahmad reports from Abu Sa'id that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Every Muslim's supplication is fulfilled unless it involves something bad for himself or his relatives. It might be fulfilled in one of three ways: it might be granted to him immediately, or (its reward) may be deferred for him to the hereafter, or he might be spared an equal amount of evil." Somebody asked, "What if we should ask for more?" The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, "Allah will give you more."

Each one of these four psychological elements of supplication involves a noble psychological process with various facets, and they lend power to the supplicant's will to raise him to a higher plane of practical behavior well-pleasing in the sight of Allah as well as of his fellow men. Such a noble pattern of behavior is always based on a person's strong conviction ingrained deep in his heart. This marks the climax of human freedom in thought as well as in behavior and gives human performance a unique strength and excellence.

II. *The Practical Elements*

The practical side of supplication is, in fact, a response to the four elements of its psychological side.

The supplicant's realization that he stands in constant need of Allah's help, his confidence in a positive response to his prayers, his trust in Allah's providential care, and his avoidance of any spite, ill-will, or other attendant negative feelings, all impact directly on a person's practical behavior. For example, the feeling that I am completely dependent on Allah makes me hope and fear. I look forward hopefully for His mercy, but also fear His displeasure. This psychological state should make me more eager and careful to abide by His will in my practical life.

When a person is in distress, his supplications tend to be more urgent and vehement. This urgency and vehemence, with all the repetition involved, forge a sense of commitment on both intellectual and behavioral levels.

My confidence that Allah does listen to my prayers makes me love Him and adore Him, and commits me in practice to what I beseech of

[329]Muslim

Allah in my supplications. If I am sure of the answer to my prayers then I do tend to behave accordingly.

When I pray for forgiveness and feel sure that my prayer will be granted, I become more careful and try not to repeat anything that could blemish my purity and state of innocence attained through supplication for forgiveness. Similarly if I pray for success in life, I must try to mold my approach and conduct in whatever way is essential to achieve a higher degree of excellence in my work. In this way, supplication instills in my mind love of work, mastery and perfection in work, and love for Allah, which latter is of prime importance as a result of my greater confidence in Him.

Reposing one's trust in Allah and entrusting one's affairs to His providential care is an effective way to engender enthusiasm and love for one's work, because it strikes a balance between what man cherishes and actually achieves and what he desires but cannot realize in practice.

Successful undertakings and critical situations, such as wars and other emergencies and momentous events, whether happy or sad, undoubtedly call for fortitude, calm, and forbearance. Perhaps the most important of these undertakings is the struggle to change one's self and the community or society in which one lives for the benefit and betterment of all people.

The injunction that one's supplication must be free of any spite, ill-will, or desire to harm others is conducive to creating a healthy and sound relationship between a man and his fellow men.

This leads us to still another consideration. What one wants for oneself, one must also desire for others. Islam induces man to share the good things of life with his fellowmen as his brothers. Islam teaches us that the more general a supplication is, the more likelihood there is of its acceptance. There are many sayings of the Prophet, peace be upon him, that corroborate this. For example, he told us that the prayer of a brother for his brother without his knowledge is always granted; and that the angels also supplicate for the sake of those who supplicate for the sake of others, saying, "And may you also be granted a similar good."

When a Muslim supplicates for others and wishes for them what he wishes for himself, and continues to do so over a long period, he benefits personally. It brings him nearer to Allah as well to his fellowmen. And he gradually attains to a state where his likes and dislikes merge and become one with the pleasure and displeasure of Allah. In

addition, he is saved from moral diseases, like malice, envy, spite, and hatred of others. Good and healthy feelings eventually become the hall-mark of his social behavior, so he is eager to help others and overlook their faults and is ready to forgive them.

He who helps his brother, will be helped by Allah. Another hadith as narrated by Anas reports that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "None of you can be a true believer unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."[330]

One of the practical requirements before a supplication is accepted is that the supplicant must pursue an honest living and earn his livelihood through lawful means. The food that he eats or the clothes that he wears, in fact all his possessions, must be lawful and acquired through lawful means. This presumes noble qualities, like honesty, good behavior, and contentment with what one has. These qualities make one the subject of others' love and of brotherly feelings and good will. A strong will is evidently necessary to achieve all these noble qualities.

Muslim has reported Abu Hurairah as saying that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Verily, Allah is pure and He accepts only that which is good and pure. Allah has commanded the believers what He commanded His messengers, saying, 'You apostles! Enjoy (all) things good and pure, and work righteousness! For I am well-acquainted with (all) that you do.'[331] Allah also says, 'O you who believe! Eat of the good things that We have provided for you.'"[332]

In the same hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, also mentioned a man who comes from a far off distance with unkempt hair and a dust-covered face and stretches out his hands in prayers to Allah and says, "My Lord! My Lord!," but his food, his drink, and his dress all are obtained unlawfully. Since he is fed on forbidden things, the Prophet, peace be upon him, asks how the prayer of such a man can be accepted.[333]

This is why Islam regards supplication as one of the greatest inducements for a Muslim to bear all his obligations and responsibilities. This works in two ways which eventually merge and become one. First, supplication develops a habit to seek Allah's help in whatever one

[330] Bukhari and Muslim
[331] Qur'an 23:51
[332] Qur'an 2:72
[333] Muslim

does. Second, it induces one to develop and improve the capabilities Allah has given one by making maximum use of them. Despite all the freedom of choice and action enjoyed by man in his particular area, he is nonetheless but a part of Allah's creation, and ultimately all affairs return to Allah. This takes us back to the first way mentioned above, i.e., the need to seek Allah's help and support in one's practical life. Thus in the above two ways, supplication of a true and sincere heart is the best and the surest way to develop and improve our natural talents and skills to the best of their capacity.

The example set before us by the Prophet, peace be upon him, is quite explicit in this regard and shows us how we can combine the two ways to achieve harmony between our aspirations expressed in supplication and the human effort necessary to materialize them in this life. The Prophet, peace be upon him, not only prayed himself and supplicated to his Lord during the night, but urged his family and his companions to do the same, and not to deprive themselves of the good contained therein.

One night on getting up for his supplications he said to his wife Umm Salama, "Go and wake (for prayer) the women who live in these houses. How many who are well dressed in this world will be naked in the hereafter!"[334]

On another occasion when overcome by sleep, 'Ali ibn Talib could not get up for his prayers, and tried to apologize by saying that if Allah had so willed he would have gotten up. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did not accept his apology. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib said, "One night Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) came to me and Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet (peace be on him), and asked, 'Won't you pray (at night)?' I said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Our souls are in the hands of Allah and if He wants us to get up He will make us get up.' When I said that, he left us without saying anything, and I heard him hitting his thigh and saying, 'But man is more quarrelsome than anything'" (Qur'an 18:54).

This hadith brings out some of the important points in this chapter:

1) Justifying a failure of human effort by referring it to the Will of Allah is a false argument and is therefore unacceptable.

2) All forms of worship require a strong will and a firm determina-

[334] Bukhari

tion, so that one can effectively dispense with physical needs, such as sleep, etc.

3) Supplication must be accompanied by human effort and endeavor of a congenial nature. Supplication denotes love, and true love relishes vigil, staying awake, and dispensing with physical comforts like sleep and rest.

4) A true believer looks after his household and brings up his children in accordance with these higher values.

5) Education is by persuasion not by compulsion. We see how the many Qur'anic verses recited by the Prophet, peace be upon him, to this effect seeped down into the depths of human souls. They will continue to do, insha'Allah, and guide and lend strength to all believing men and women until the very end of time.

The life of the Prophet provides a noble example for all fathers and mothers and shows them how to guide and convince their children with love and wisdom, without seeking to force or coerce them into obedience, for the use of force may instead make them intransigent and leave them cold and disinterested in following good and noble examples.

In another hadith, the Prophet, peace be upon him, shows us that verbal supplication is closely related to human effort, free will, and behavior. A hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah says, "Satan puts three knots at the back of one's head when one is asleep. Over one knot he breathes the following words: "The night is long, so stay asleep." When one awakes and remembers Allah, one knot is undone; and when one performs ablution the second knot is undone, and when one prays the third knot is undone and one gets up energetic with a good heart in the morning; otherwise one gets up lazy and with a mischievous heart."[335]

Dr. Mohammad Abdullah Darraz has quoted this hadith in dealing with the effect of human effort and will on choosing good rather than evil. We overcome and get over the difficulties in our way through our own determination and effort. He writes, "In order to have a more or less true picture of the difficulties that confront our will when dealing with our aptitudes, whether inherited or acquired, let us imagine a person who is fast asleep. He hears the sound of an alarm clock. If a person is awake even for a few moments it is enough to

[335] Bukhari, on Tahajjud.

make him conscious and feel at once the discomfort of loss of sleep. Here, normally, the human will has three options. One may say to oneself, while his body is still in a state of complete rest, 'I should continue to sleep,' or 'I want to wake up, but I don't have the will,' or 'I should get up and go to work.' Obviously, the first option, which renders one unable to perform one's duties, cannot be a natural reaction. One can, without even getting up, take the second option, which indicates a weak will and an effort to escape from reality. Therefore once this stage of choice is reached and a man takes the middle option because it is the easier, he shows the weakness of his will. But we can make a fresh attempt, and if we do so we find that even an attempt to get up may finally awaken us fully and remove any doubt about our power and will to do so. True, we might feel a bit uneasy at first, but with some enthusiasm even the sleepiest person may overcome the desire for sleep."

The idea touched on here is contained in the famous hadith quoted above from Abu Hurairah concerning the weakness of the human will at the moment of awakening. The method prescribed by the Prophet, peace be upon him, consists of several inter-related and consecutive steps to overcome the physical restrictions imposed on the human will, which are first to utter a word that reminds one of one's duty, then to get up, and then to wash one's face, hands, and feet with water, and so on. A little effort, painful as it is in the beginning, makes the body fresh, and the soul's comfort and pleasure is also soon thereafter restored.[336]

III. *Supplications for Strength of Will*

There are a number of ahadith exclusively concerned about developing and strengthening the human will. Abu Bakr and 'Umar relate from Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace be on him, used to pray: "O Allah, I seek refuge with You from incapacity and laziness, and from cowardice and old age, and I seek refuge with You from the afflictions of life and death and from the punishment of the grave."

If we consider this hadith in the light of the previous one, we realize that supplication for protection against incapacity and helplessness can only create a psychological aversion to these weaknesses in the mind of a Muslim and induce him to gain strength and ability. In fact

[336]Bukhari

such a prayer opens up before a person the practical way to realize his cherished goals and expectations in life. It coordinates and harmonizes a person's skills and abilities for the realization of his dreams.

The *sunnah* of the Prophet, peace be upon him, exemplifies a perfect harmony between supplication and its practical manifestations. Once a Companion from among the Ansar came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and complained to him about his needs and poverty. Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, taught him in a practical way how to overcome his difficulties and live up to the higher ideals of supplication wherein a Muslim seeks refuge with Allah from incapacity and laziness.

"Haven't you got anything in your house?" he asked him. "Yes, I have a piece of old cloth which we use as a dress as well as a floor-cover, besides a pot that we use for drinking water."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, publicly auctioned these articles among his Companions. They were sold for less than two dirhams. He then ordered the Ansari companion to buy food for his family with one durham, and an axe with the other. He then ordered the man not to come to see him for a fortnight, and advised him to spend all this time in cutting wood and selling it. Two weeks later, the Ansari companion came to see him. Now he had ten dirhams. Thereupon the Prophet, peace be upon him, said to him, "This is better for you than coming on the Day of Judgement with your face marked (and disfigured) with beggary."

If this psychological and physical analysis is compatible with living reality as a tangible evidence of Allah's help to those of His servants who pray to Him for it, how vast and great must the rest of the signs of Allah's help and support for His servants be, which we with our limited powers are neither able to perceive nor in a position to analyze and fully understand.

One of the supplications for preserving and strengthening the human will teaches us to seek refuge with Allah from Satan when we are angry. The purpose is to keep one's will free of the adverse effects of anger in order to safeguard oneself and others against harm by remaining calm in difficult situations.

Bukhari relates from Sulayman ibn Sard that he said, "Two men insulted each other in front of the Prophet, peace be upon him, while we were sitting with him. One of the two abused his companion furiously and his face became red. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'I know a word (or a sentence) the saying of which will cause

him to relax. He need say only: "I take refuge with Allah from Satan, the outcast." So they said to that (furious) man, 'Seek refuge with Allah from Satan.' The man replied, 'Am I mad?'"[337]

Another hadith which focuses on the practical side of the same problem tells us that once a man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, anxious to learn and follow the teachings of Islam. But he wanted something brief and to the point which he could easily understand and put into practice. He got what he wanted. Abu Hurairah said, "A man came to the Prophet, peace be on him, and said to him, 'Teach me something brief and to the point, so that I can easily understand and follow it.' The Prophet, peace be on him, said, 'Do not become angry and furious.' The man asked the same (question) again and again, and each time the Prophet, peace be on him, replied, 'Do not become angry and furious.'"[338]

This is how the *sunnah* promotes perfect harmony between a man's verbal supplication and his practical life. The Prophet, peace be upon him, not only taught us to supplicate to Allah for help in restraining our anger, but at the same time admonished us to take comparable and necessary practical steps to achieve the desired end by keeping our tempers cool and remaining patient and steadfast under difficult conditions.

In another supplication, Muslims are taught to take refuge with Allah against the evil they might sometimes see in their dreams so as not to be haunted by any feelings of fear or pessimism that could affect their character, weaken their will, and cast a shadow over their practical life and behavior. Some people take dreams very seriously, and their whole course of life is influenced by them. Bukhari narrates from Abu Qatadah that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "A good dream that comes true is from Allah, and a bad dream is from Satan, so if anyone of you sees a bad dream, he should seek refuge with Allah from Satan and should spit on the left, for the bad dream will not harm him."[339]

Some of the supplications warn Muslims against the danger of indulging in frivolous argument for it might sometimes tarnish one's relationship with Allah. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Satan comes to you and says, 'Who created this?

[337] Bukhari and Muslim
[338] Bukhari, Ahmad, Tirmidhi
[339] Bukhari

Who created that?' until he says, 'Who created your Lord?' Then you should take refuge with Allah and go no further."[340]

Some other supplications teach us to seek Allah's help to preserve our efforts, thought, and will from the adverse effects of old age and senility. Bukhari narrates from Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to pray, "O Allah! I seek refuge with You from miserliness and laziness, old age, punishment of the grave, the affliction of al-Dajjal, and the afflictions of life and death."[341]

Some of these supplications warn Muslims against despair, which leads to hatred of life and abandonment of one's responsibility by weakening one's will. Abu Dawud has related on the authority of Anas ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "None of you should pray for death because of a calamity that befalls him, but he may say, 'O Allah, Let me live as long as life is better for me, and take my life if death is better for me."'[342] In the version of the hadith given by Tirmidhi we find the words, "None of you should long for death because of a calamity that had fallen him, and if he cannot but long for death then he should say... ."[343]

These are just some of the different situations that are covered by ahadith with a view to preserving a Muslim's will, determination, reason, and personality through supplication. We have chosen only those that touch on some of the more important aspects of life. These topics may be summarized as follows:

1) Helplessness and laziness, which may weaken one's will and determination and thereby undermine the very basis of all successful human efforts;

2) Cowardice and meanness, which may affect one's behavior and make one neglect one's duties;

3) Senility and its bad effects, like weakness and illness;

4) Afflictions of life as well as the afflictions of the grave and its torture;

5) Supplication against Al-Dajjal (the Anti-Christ) in order to forewarn the Muslims against future dangers and to induce them to protect themselves from them and not be caught unawares;

6) Anger, which may make one lose self-control;

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[340] Bukhari and Muslim

[341] Bukhari

[342] See also Muslim, Nasa'i, and Tirmidhi.

[343] *Al-Manhal Al-Mawrud*, vol. 7, 241- 242

7) Useless and frivolous disputation, which may lead to unnecessary doubt, and against which we should seek refuge with Allah; and

8) Despair, which may make one wish for death, and which can be countered through a proper supplication without despair or dejection.

O Allah! Brighten our souls and hearts with hope and confidence, adorn our efforts and behavior with piety and consistency, bless us and our community through Islam, and shower the best and the choicest of your blessings upon our guide, Prophet Mohammad, sallalahu alahi wa sallam.

Praise be to You O Lord, our Creator, our Guide. Through Your grace and help alone good deeds are accomplished. We are unable to praise You sufficiently, for You are as You praised Yourself. There is no power, nor any strength, except with Your help and support!

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Index of Subjects

Backwardness . . . 1
Capability factor . . . 70
Change . . . 1
Charity . . . 5, 6, 66, 67, 82, 100, 104, 105, 106, 107
Crucifixion . . . 37
Divine facilitation:
(istidraj) . . . 108, 111, 112, 113, 141, 142
(maisar) . . . 110
(yusr, taisir) . . . 104, 106, 108, 109, 110, 113, 141
Divine providence . . . 91, 119, 123, 127, 128, 129, 133, 134, 139, 142, 146, 153, 163
Divine support . . . 149, 150
Divine Will . . . 36, 118, 119, 122, 125, 130, 134, 138, 139, 140, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153
Enemies' motto . . . 2
Enemies' plot . . . 2
Human freedom . . . 35, 39, 104, 124, 139
Human reason . . . 36, 37
Intention . . . 13, 35, 62, 69, 71, 81, 97, 112, 117, 168, 169, 174, 180
Martyrdom . . . 4, 5, 175, 176
Mas'uliya . . . 8, 9
Obedience . . . I, 13, 16, 41, 44, 47, 48, 49, 50, 65, 67
Patience . . . 78, 82
Predestination, principle of . . . 90, 109, 123, 154, 156, 157
Responsibility:
acceptance of . . . 9, 139
age of . . . 53, 54, 67
being mindful of . . . 10
comprehensiveness of . . . 4, 8
definition of . . . 9, 10
for one's own deeds . . . 9, 189
for wrath from Allah . . . 9, 10
highest form of . . . 4
imposition of . . . 13
lowest form of . . . 4
moral responsibility . . . 11, 12, 21

most important aspect of . . . 10
of rulers . . . 9, 10
philosophical meaning . . . 11, 12, 13, 14, 19
religious responsibility . . . 9, 10, 11, 12
sociological meaning . . . 11, 12, 14, 15
stages of . . . 81, 82
three basic elements of . . . 9, 10, 17, 18
three main conditions for . . . 53, 54, 55
three principles of . . . 16
three types . . . 11
to whom . . . 10
willing acceptance of . . . 13
Sacrifice . . . 4, 5, 6, 21, 65
Stages of human development . . . 33, 36
Supplication:
psychological ingredients of . . . 197
uses of . . . 199
The Testimony . . . 47, 51, 52
Three types of crimes . . . 16
Training . . . 4, 59, 62
Trust . . . 47, 48
Utilitarianism . . . 21
Vicegenerent . . . 42, 47, 49, 50
Will (mash'ia) . . . 148, 151, 152

Index of Hadith Citations

Adam's superiority . . . 39, 40
Authority . . .
Capability . . . 70
Charity . . . 5, 6, 107, 180, 181
Compulsion . . . 70, 71
Divine facilitation:
(istidraj) . . . 104, 105
(yusr) . . . 106, 108, 109, 110
Divine providence . . . 122, 133, 142, 143, 146
Divine will . . . 120, 121, 133, 153
Fasting . . . 72, 73, 74, 177, 178, 179
Fate . . . 156, 157
Free will, use of . . . 122, 143, 149
Initial actions . . . 142
Intentions . . . 169, 170, 171, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183
Man's monotheistic nature . . . 43
Man's superiority . . . 39, 40
Martyrdom . . . 5, 175, 176
Mistakes . . . 44, 45
Reform . . . 83
Responsibility:
absolution from . . . 56
in issuing verdicts . . . 63
in the womb . . . 43, 46
individual . . . 190, 195
of body members . . . 60, 61, 62, 63, 64
of humans . . . 81
of responsible speech . . . 61, 62, 63, 64
to be sincere . . . 65
to enjoin good and forbid evil . . . 66, 187
to keep silent . . . 61, 64, 66

phases of:
first . . . 81, 82
second . . . 82, 83, 84, 85
third . . . 86, 87, 88
prerequisites of . . . 74
to refrain from abusing . . . 60, 62, 63
to speak . . . 205, 206
Sanity . . . 70
Signs of puberty . . . 46, 67
Supplication:
for self-reliance . . . 198, 199, 203, 205
for will-power . . . 201, 202, 204, 207
Willful submission . . . 204

Qur'anic References:

Adam's superiority
. . . 2:31 & 34
Angels' friendliness
. . . 18:50, 2:97-98
Angels, recording
. . . 82:10-12
Basis of responsibility
. . . 7:172
Bounds of reason
. . . 18:51
Capability
. . . 2:286
Change
. . . 13:11
Charity
. . . 74:17
Choice
. . . 76:1-3, 91:7-10, 76:2-3, 90:3, 8, 10,
. . . 91:7-8
. . . 76:3, 91:8-9, 90:5-11, 17-19), 76:1,
. . . 90:7-11, 76:3, 41:17, 90:10, 73:17-19,
. . . 74:36-38, 54-55, 78:39, 36:66-67
Denying bounties of Allah
. . . 16:112
Divine facilitation
istidraj
. . . 7:58, 47:28, 7:182-183, 19:75, 11:12, 7:99,
. . . 31:34,
. . . 30:17-18, 116:32, 43:72, 53:31-32
yusr
. . . 92:5-10, 92:1-10, 80:20, 87:8, 92:1-10,
. . . 53:39-41, 3:191, 92:5-10, 19:71-72
Divine help
. . . 29:69, 1:5, 2:45, 153, 29:45

Divine providence
. . . 4:78, 76:30, 81:29, 14:4, 16:93, 35:8,
. . . 74:31, 3:40, 11:6, 54:49-50
. . . 16:18,
. . . 11:6,
. . . 7:54, 46:11, 82:6-8
role of
. . . 2:253, 16:93, 42:8, 32:13, 11:18,
. . . 6:35-36,
. . . 6:112-113, 10:99, 22:5-6, 6:95, 36:36,
. . . 50:7-8, 13:4
Divine will
. . . 42:11, 2:6-7, 5:41, 6:25, 6:125, 28:56,
. . . 35:8, 2:6, 5:41, 55:18-28, 6:20,21,25-26,
. . . 6:123, 18.27-29
Ease
. . . 2:185
Fate
. . . 54:49, 47:31
Forgetting Allah
. . . 20:124-126
Freedom, loss of
. . . 9:54
Guidance
. . . 18:17, 14:277
Human effort
. . . 8:53, 13:11, 8:50-54, 13:6-11
Human freedom, role of
. . . 18:23-24, 76:29-30, 102:27-29, 59:5,
. . . 6:148-149, 10:99, 16:35, 43:20-21, 96:5,
. . . 55:4, 2:31, 12:55
Human senses
. . . 7:171, 17:36, 16:78, 46:26
Individual capacities
. . . 2:286
Intention
. . . 16:106, 29:1-2, 3:139-141, 3:110, 5:51,
. . . 11:15-16
Legislation
. . . 16:116

Manners of children
. . . 24:58
Man's disposition
. . . 4:1
Man's form
. . . 82:6-8
Man's limitations
. . . 22:73
Man's innocence
. . . 30:30
Man's monotheistic nature
. . . 7:172-173
Man's nobility
. . . 17:70, 56:10-12, 95:1-4, 15:29
Martyrdom
. . . 3:169
Mistakes
. . . 2:286
Patience
. . . 12:18
Reform
. . . 3:86-89
Rejection
. . . 13:11, 14:17, 59:19, 64:5-6, 61:5,
. . . 47:7,14,17, 2:10, 9:124-125, 16:107,
. . . 19:76
Rejecting the truth
. . . 7:96
Responsibility
. . . 2:187, 5:7, 7:2-6, 8:27, 21:23, 43:44,
. . . 49:7,
. . . 57:8, 55:1-4
individual
. . . 5:107, 31:15, 6:104, 109, 34:25, 5:108,
. . . 34:31-32, 41:46, 31:33, 80:34-35,
. . . 17:13-15,
. . . 14:21, 2:166, 7:38-39, 14:22, 81:8-9,
. . . 26:214,
to keep silent
. . . 5:104

Righteousness
. . . (2:177)
. . . file 10, p. 166.
Sacrifice
. . . 34:39
Satan's hostility
. . . 2:35-36
Seeing, importance of
. . . 7:185, 88:17-21, 22:46, 67:10
Self-oblivion
. . . 59:19
Supplication
. . . 27:62, 17:11, 23:51, 2:72, 18:54
The testimony
. . . 7:172
Tongue & lips
. . . 90:8-10
The trust
. . . 33:72
Unseen, belief in
. . . 2:1-3
Vicegeneracy
. . . 2:30, 2:30, 32-34,
Walking & speaking
. . . 31:18, 50:18, 17:37
Will (mash'iah)
. . . 4:78-79, 6:149

Index of Proper Names

Al-Darami, Uthman ibn Said . . . 13, 39
Awdah, Abdul Qadir . . . 15, 17
Bacon, Frances . . . 21
Badawi, AbdurRahman . . . 19, 20
Darraz, Muhammad Abdullah . . . 15, 23
Descartes . . . 20
Emerson . . . 20
Epicurean . . . 21
Fakonet, Paul . . . 22, 23, 24, 25
Ghallab, Muhammad . . . 21
Heidegger . . . 21
Hobbesian School . . . 21
Ibn Jarir . . . 42, 44, 45, 46, 99, 120, 170
Ibn Kathir . . . 42, 44, 45, 46, 109, 110, 113, 120, 121, 158, 170
Ibn al-Qayyim . . . 149
al-Mahlab . . . 65
Makhluf, Shaikh . . . 41, 42
Ostler . . . 19
Qurtubi . . . 41, 120
Satre, Jean Paul . . . 22
Shaukani . . . 65
Tawil, Tawfik . . . 21
Wafi, Ali AbdulWahid . . . 25